An application of Maurice Blanchot's notion of modern literature: to an analyses of P.B. Shelley's Alastor, Julian and Maddalo and the triumph of life

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An Application of Maurice Blanchot's Notion of Modern Literature To An Analysis of P.B. Shelley's *Alastor, Julian and Maddalo* and *The Triumph of Life*

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AN APPLICATION OF MAURICE BLANCHOT'S NOTION OF MODERN LITERATURE TO AN ANALYSIS OF P.B.SHELLEY'S *ALASTOR, JULIAN AND MADDALO,* AND *THE TRIUMPH OF LIFE*

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ABSTRACT

The thesis considers the parallel critiques of the notion of poesis as a mode of subjective power of self-determination in P.B. Shelley and Maurice Blanchot. It explores the terms in which, in the romantic-idealist tradition, the work of art is valorised as the realisation of the subject's access to spiritual significance.

The thesis traces one of the sources of Blanchot's notion of `modern literature' to his understanding of romanticism. It describes the ways in which Blanchot's notion of the non-romantic essence of romanticism deconstructs the romantic-idealist model of the work of literature as a mode of subjective self-realisation. Blanchot focuses on the fact that the presence of the critique of this model within the romantic/idealist theorization of the work of literature turns literature into a self-questioning, rather than a self-realizing structure. The idealist framework offers a notion of absolute reflection which significantly extends the model/figure of the autonomous subject. The thesis will argue that, on the evidence of some of Shelley's prose fragments, the empiricist and sceptical heritage of Shelley's conception of the mind draws him away from subscribing to such a model, and ultimately leads him to repeal it. The thesis will also argue that a similar undermining of the individual integrity of the subject can be observed in Shelley's conception of self-identity.

The analysis undertaken in the thesis concentrates on how a distinction between the ability to realize the poetical work and a process of self-realization is manifested in the three poems selected for scrutiny, and how this problematic is developed through the individual imaginative quest embodied in the figure of the poet in *Alastor*.
The thesis will also explore the ways in which the ambivalence of the articulations around which the world of sanity and the notion of the accomplished work of literature are organized and dramatized in *Julian and Maddalo*. The *Triumph of Life* is then contrasted with the theme of the representative relation of the poet in concord to his community that is offered in *A Defence of Poetry*. In this poem, the principle of creation is likened to the course of history.

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INTRODUCTION

In *Alastor* (1815), a poem which is often considered to be Shelley's first masterful poetical achievement, the motif of the quest is the object of a crisis. In this poem, the romantic motif of the quest, which is indicative of the poet's imaginative process, and, through the poet's representativity, of the subject's ability to access spiritual significance, is not fulfilled. In this case, the lack of fulfilment of the quest does not only put its ultimate objective, to reunite the poet with the object of his vision, into doubt. It does not seem possible either to assert that the journey itself can be finally recognized as constituting its own goal. The lack of fulfilment seems, therefore, to have also negative implications for the justification of the poetical enterprise.

The failure which is represented in the poem inaugurating Shelley's poetical career casts doubt on the poet's capacity to access the imaginary. It presents inspiration as an overwhelming occurrence jeopardizing the poet's ability to even be a poet by making use of his power. In this sense, this poem pushes the view which Shelley expressed six years later in *A Defence of Poetry* that, "[P]oetry is a sword of lightning, ever unsheathed, which consumes the scabbard that would contain it," (1) to more damaging consequences than even the destruction of the poet for the sake of his art, since he cannot give it expression by himself. On the contrary, the lack of fulfilment and the absence

of art are made to prevail. Instead of constituting a response to the poet's aspiration, the imaginative and creative quest disastrously exacerbates a lack, which it is powerless to alleviate. Yet, paradox lies in the fact that this unfulfilled enterprise still finds the means and the resources to take place, irrespective of its inner contradiction.

It is this discrepancy between underlying intent to reach a moment of fulfilment, yet the latent lack of concern with such intent in the quest itself, which I wish to focus on in this thesis. Moreover, In *A Defence of Poetry*, Shelley refers to the aspect which renders poetry recalcitrant to the purposeful intervention of the poet: "Poetry is not like reasoning, a power to be exerted according to the determination of the will." (2) It may be suggested, therefore, that, in conceiving poetry as an accomplishment which does not, however, present itself as a project, Shelley demonstrates the awareness of a tension at the heart of the notion of the work of poetry.

The paradox noted concerning the romantic quest in Shelley can also be related to the sceptical vein within Shelley's poetry, which distinguishes that poetry from that of, for example, Wordsworth. As Rajan (3) has noticed, the Shelleyan 'epiphany', or poetic illumination, differs from the Wordsworthian epiphany in that it lacks "the transcendental and unequivocal purity" that is present in the latter. There is, then, a decidedly intermediary or transitional aspect to it, which undermines the faith in the imagination usually associated with Romanticism.

However, this scepticism does not necessarily contradict the extreme quality of the claims which, as in *A Defence of Poetry* Shelley directs at visionary poetry, to the effect that poetry is said to restore the world to its true comprehension. Along the same lines, and within the political domain, Paul Dawson has noted that the difficulties facing Shelley's demand for the total transformation of social life reinforced his commitment to the possibility of even limited progress. (4) More generally, the ineffectuality with which Shelley was at one time reproached seems to stem from a misunderstanding over the value which Shelley placed on the 'non-actual', and even the impractical. There is, therefore, a sense in which ineffectuality, for Shelley, becomes a virtue.

Shelley hoped that extreme, impractical views, by virtue of being held, could generate the conditions of their wider acceptance. According to this model, Shelley's valorization of poets as "unacknowledged legislators" in *A Defence of Poetry*, lies precisely in the fact that the efficacy of their action cannot be concretely located, or directly attributed to them. The power of the poetic vision, for Shelley, lies in its unfamiliarity and obscurity, and, therefore, in the fact that it resists becoming assimilated within the familiar. It is, accordingly, apparent from this that poetry is neither competing with, or completing, a view of the world from which it itself must remain distant.

My approach to Shelley's poems will involve the consideration of an understanding of Romanticism bequeathed mainly by idealist

philosophy, because, within the terms of this largely German problematic, the divorce between art and the objective world, a divorce within which the conception of poetry in *A Defence of Poetry* is concerned, is taken to a relative extremis. According to the key tenet of the German philosophical understanding of art, within the aesthetic judgement, the subject is the locale of spiritual significance, transcending the division between the objective and subjective realms. In the motif of the quest, for example, the poet's access to such spiritual significance, and to the power animating the universe as a whole, is of central consequence.

However, there is also an ambivalence involved in an understanding of the work of art as the 'process' which demonstrates the subject's ability to access spiritual significance, and this ambiguity consists in the fact that the artwork is the means of access to a transcendent meaning of which it itself is the product. This may be considered as the paradox which drove the German romantics, particularly Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis, to develop a theory of literature, and a theory of the realization of the artwork. It is also this paradox which is a central concern in the work of Maurice Blanchot, who has elaborated on the conception of literature explored and theorized by the German romantics, in a way which bypasses the dualism which is often brought to bear on an understanding of the achievement of the romantic work of literature.

The approach taken in this study may be differentiated from two other interpretations of Romanticism which mirror each other in the way that they focus on the idealizing quest. The first type of interpretation examines the way in which romantic texts may be taken as the tales of a consciousness engaged in a quest for the ideal and driven by visions of unity. In this respect, these interpretations are faithful to the abiding legacy of Romanticism, which Hugh Roberts defines as "the hermeneutical drive from the fragmentary part to absolute whole." (5) This approach is also apparent in the works of Earl Wasserman (1971), and the New Critics. As in the case of Meyer Abrams' *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (1971), this approach can be understood as a secular version of theological plots of fall and redemption.

By contrast, within the second type of interpretation, which adopts the theories and methods of structuralism, the intervention of the medium of language makes it impossible for the imagination to effect the intended "unmediated contact with noumenal levels of reality." (6) Within this interpretation, analysis focuses on the way in which experience is in fact reconstructed within language. The quest for the ideal is, then, here considered as a rhetorical device. This second type of interpretation of the idealizing endeavour analyses the rhetorical means that concede the inevitable gap, either involuntarily, or voluntary, between words and meaning. Here, within this form of rhetorical or deconstructive interpretation, the romantic text is seen as inherently ironical.

While, in the former reading, Romanticism is associated with an "aggrandizement of art," because art is seen as a remedy for the divisions of self-consciousness, it has also been argued that the transcendental imagination's action of forming the unity or synthesis between the sensible and the intelligible, is, for the Romantics, a 'question', not an assured possibility. (7) On the basis of this uncertainty, it is possible to see romantic texts as "disclosing the conflicting constituents of their themes and categories, and as deriving insight from the questioning of their assumptions". (8) However, as noted by Chase, it is difficult to define the knowledge which is expected from the exposure of such a conflict:

> Even the contradictions or incoherencies such a reading may discover...can be seen as producing meaning and knowledge at a higher level. How to describe the grounds and the status of such knowledge ...is one of the fundamental issues under dispute. (9)

The acquisition of such insight can be associated with the concept of the progressive work of art, as it was developed by the early German Romantics at Jena, and, in particular, by Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis, at the turn of the 19th century. They envisaged the work of art in its infinite movement of poiesis as a demonstration of the growth and self-transcendence of which the subject is capable. For the Jena romantics, the fact that the artwork could not be reduced to a determinate meaning indicated the subject's unique connection to an Absolute for which he or she could long for. However, if, as suggested, the 'crisis' described in *Alastor* does not allow for such a return to unity, then the Jena model becomes jeopardized.

It is at this point that Maurice Blanchot's reflexions on literature offer a rewarding perspective on the quality of achievement which the work of literature is considered to constitute. Blanchot is recognized as having renewed the critical debate concerning the ontological status of literature in ways which involve a reconsideration of the relation between literature and philosophy. (10) My concern at this point within this Introduction is to now delineate the core concepts derived from Blanchot on which this research project will draw; and to discuss the ways in which these illuminate the paradox noted earlier, concerning the crisis affecting the romantic quest in Shelley.

It is essential to Blanchot's reflexions on literature to recognize that, for him, art is the appellation for "the desire for absolute consciousness, absolute knowledge or the work to end all works." (11) Here, Blanchot appears to endorse fully the romantic agenda of the valorization of the work of art in terms of an absolute, instead of demystifying it in terms of an "ideology of the aesthetic", because, for Blanchot, this endorsement prevents art from being assuaged into mere aesthetic enjoyment. In Romanticism, Blanchot detects the first sign of the fact that the importance and role of art are connected to a mode of accomplishment which is derived from the absolute demand which idealist philosophy may be considered to have placed on it. Blanchot's account of romantic transformation in art, as significant of the tension between "the conquest of the world according to the aims of the realizing mind" and "an increasingly

pure, subjective intimacy", which characterizes the modern period, is encapsulated as follows in *The Space of Literature*:

> Art too plays its part in this destiny... The artistic ego affirms that it is the sole judge of itself, the only justification for what it does and what it seeks. Romanticism's notion of genius strengthens this royal subject which is not only beyond ordinary rules but foreign to the law of achievement and success on its own terrain as well. Art, useless to the world where only effectiveness counts, is also useless to itself. (12)

For Blanchot, therefore, Romanticism marks the moment when the realization of the work of literature is put in question, by virtue of the art work's withdrawal from the objective world of "the realizing mind." But it also marks the moment when the literary work's mode of being as question becomes the way in which literature asserts itself: "literature begins when it becomes a question," and consists in this question. (13) Out of the modern dilemma which withdraws art from objective forms of realization, art finds a mode of realization which encapsulates its essential distance from the world. In this way, Blanchot repeatedly affirms the demand to reach the absolute, which lies at the root of the romantic poetical work, but transforms it into a demand which is now placed on the work: "poetry is the effort towards what is thus unrealizable, and [that] it has... this impossibility and this contradiction that it seeks to realize in vain, for its foundation". (14) Here, the work of literature becomes, within Blanchot's terms, the paradoxical realization of the irrealizable, and one of the hypotheses of this project is that the crisis of the poetical achievement of which *Alastor* has

been seen as a testimony may be understood in terms of Blanchot's conception of this paradox.

However, in the process which has been outlined here, poetry can no longer be associated unambiguously with the possibility of disclosing another, truer world, which the world of conscious or rational determinations might overlook. Nor can poetry suggest or 'illuminate' a more 'authentic' life. The kind of primal harmony to which art is supposed to return things and which is implied in the view of the aim of art as being, for instance, "freedom for the world of things which are allowed once more their singularity and self-possession, to impart what is peculiar to themselves," obstructs the claims of the artwork to such possibilities. As a result, the work of art may be said to radically fragment the unity to which, on the other hand, it seeks to testify. There is, then, a sense in which the modern work of literature, as Blanchot conceives it, seals the end of the aspiration with which romanticism is centrally associated.

For Blanchot, Romanticism is also the moment when the assertion of the work of art can no longer be taken as a subjective self-assertion. The movement of art away from the world, and the paradoxical mode of accomplishment which the work of literature becomes, also draws the latter away from such notions as decision, will, or power, which characterize the autonomous so-called humanist subject. On the contrary, for Blanchot, the work's ability to appear not to have been made allows it to be fully the work which the romantics envisaged:

> that which is glorified in the work *is* the work, when the work ceases in some way to have been made, to refer back to someone who made it, but gathers all the essence of the work in the fact that now there is a work... (15)

Blanchot's reflexions radically modify a more traditional understanding of the work of literature as the accomplishment of subjective self-determination. In this case also, then, Blanchot's theory of the work of literature sustains the romantic agenda, but with consequences which also strike at the heart of that agenda.

As has been suggested in this Introduction, the romantic quest for the Absolute may in fact reflect the need to maintain a form of aspiration to which such power is inadequate, except to the extent that it is still a response to it. The gain which is expected from taking on board Blanchot's perspective into an examination of some of Shelley's poems lies in the possibility to reconsider them not so much as the scene of struggle between opposing yet related philosophical or intellectual impulses, such as scepticism and faith in the ideal; but, to see such a struggle as the effect of a movement of writing which is an articulation of itself, whereby the romantic quest is fuelled by its very pursuit.

Chapter Breakdown

The poems selected for analysis here may be considered as amongst the least lyrical in the Shelleyan corpus. In this, they reflect a lack of assurance in the basis which subjective self-expression provides for the poetical process, and a lack of assurance in the belief that these poems are the realization of a mastery of self-expression. The three poems selected, *Alastor* (1815), *Julian and Maddalo* (1819), and *The Triumph of Life* (1822), span Shelley's career, and they all express the tale of an anomaly which hampers the possibility that they may even be narrated, leaving the poems which narrate them tinged with the regret of not having done justice to what may, nevertheless, be only held as an aberration: the sacrifice of a poet to his quest.

Chapter One: This chapter will explore the ways in which some aspects of early German romanticism in Jena can be said to contrast with the understanding of art offered by transcendental idealism. In particular, the chapter will analyse the way in which the notion of the 'fragment' both reflects and unsettles/ dissolves the dilemma in which the idealist understanding of the artwork as the presentation of spiritual significance places the artwork - whether as the result of such significance, or as the means of reaching it. The chapter will also discuss these issues in relation to the ideas of Blanchot, particularly as expressed in his *The Athenaeum*.

Chapter TWO: This Chapter will explore the influence of empiricist philosophy on Shelley's notion of mind, as expressed in the essays collected under the title "Speculations on Metaphysics" (1817-21). The chapter will chart Shelley's turn from rationalism, towards a less rationalist and more hermeneutical conception of the mind. Shelley's own transformation of the empiricist doctrine will be analysed in connection with his early project to make the mind the locus of its own power.

Chapter Three: Chapter three will consider Shelley's 'Difficulty of Analyzing the Human Mind' as an example of Shelley's unsettling confrontation with the aporias of self-reflexion. The chapter will then show how this is treated in a particular way in *Alastor*, through an analysis of the poetic quest as a psychic journey which is animated by an unmastered energy.

Chapter Four: This chapter will consider Shelley's *Julian and Maddalo* in relation to Blanchot's notion of fascination, where, as reflected in the Maniac's speech, the subject is dispossessed of his power of comprehension. The analysis will also draw on the concept of subjectivity as resisting totalisation in order to illuminate the depiction of derangement in this poem.

Chapter Five: This Chapter will contrast Shelley's understanding of the shaping influence of poets upon their society, as argued in *A Defence of Poetry* (1821), with the concomitant and more hazardous aspect of poetry as a disruption of familiarity,

through the wish to speak truly, and the wish for history as a true narrative, as expressed by Rousseau, the persona at the centre of poetry's contrary demands, in *The Triumph of Life*.

CHAPTER ONE

Blanchot and Romantic Literature

In this Chapter, I intend to examine various interpretations of art and of literary production within romanticism with a view to establishing Maurice Blanchot's notion of "the non-romantic essence of romanticism", and its link with his own notion of literature. Blanchot's phrase, "the non-romantic essence of romanticism" appears in his essay, 'L' Athenaeum' ('The Athenaeum') in *L'Entretien infini* (1), which refers to the short-lived journal issued between 1798 and 1800 by the German romantics at Jena, amongst whom Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis played a prominent role. Blanchot focuses in particular on the way in which, poetry, which is understood by the romantics as the self-possessed knowledge of the idealist subject's free consciousness, and which has, then, no other purpose but to accomplish itself consciously as a "literary absolute", fails, at least in part. Blanchot sees this withdrawal of the Jena Romantics from the post-Kantian idealist agenda as the emergence of literature in a modern sense, where the notion of its self-realization is at issue. Blanchot's understanding of this crucial Romantic moment is expected to offer a perspective on the three poems selected from Shelley's corpus, from which the tensions arising from a consideration of Shelley in terms of idealism or

scepticism may appear as the effects of the question of the self-realization of literature as Blanchot illuminates it.

I will begin, first, by looking at the influence of Kantian aesthetics on romantic conceptions of literature, focusing on Kant's concept of subjectivity, and on his concept of art. As Andrew Bowie has argued, Kant is the philosopher who distinguished the aesthetic judgment as indicative of the subject's capacity for a degree of meaningfulness which natural science could not explain. (2) Kant can then be seen as having set the terms of the modern notion of aesthetics, and opened the way for romantic interpretations of art as providing a relation to the world which is inaccessible to reflexive thought, but is a testimony to the subject's freedom in participating in a higher creative principle at work in the world, without being subsumed by it. I will then look at a number of more contemporary critical writings which examine the romantic conception of art and literary production, including the writings of Deleuze, Kipperman and others, and will focus on Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy's *L'Absolu littéraire*. This book provides an analysis of the way in which the notion of literature proposed by early German romanticism evolved from a perceived lack in Kantian philosophy. This lack consisted in its inability to provide an account of the subject out of the capacities which it attributes to it. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy are then led to consider the romantic notion of the literary work in terms of a dilemma between the desire for a complete work of art and the dissolution of this work, which they connect to Blanchot's conception of literature.(3) I will then

conclude by examining the account of the romantic conception of art and literary production within the writings of Blanchot, and underline the relevance of the notion of literature offered by German romanticism for an understanding of Blanchot's ideas. Finally, I will establish, provisionally, how the ideas of Blanchot may help to illuminate aspects of Shelley's poetry.

Art and the Problem of Intellectual Intuition

In *L'Absolu littéraire*, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy argue that both German idealism, represented mainly by Fichte and Schelling, and early German romanticism, represented by the Jena writers at the turn of the 19th century, appropriated Kant's formulations of the articulation between art and subjectivity, where art offers an image of subjective fulfilment in harmony with the world. However, according to Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, romanticism distinguishes itself from metaphysical idealism in the following manner:

> The most specific gesture of romanticism, the gesture whereby it distinguishes itself by the narrowest and most crucial margin from metaphysical idealism, is the gesture whereby at the heart of the quest for, and the theory of, the Work [the realization of a harmonious relation of consciousness and world, which the cognitive relation to the world can only suggest in a piecemeal fashion], romanticism forsakes, and, discretely and on the whole unwittingly, withdraws the work itself, and turns almost imperceptibly into "the work of the absence of work".
> (4)

As Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy argue, this is how early German romanticism initiates a notion of literature beside its avowed assertion of a "literary absolute": the realization, within the

form of a self-contained work of art, of a meaningfulness which cannot be derived from what is given. In order to clarify the way in which, following Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, Maurice Blanchot's notion of "the work of the absence of work" (5) can enlighten an understanding of the essence of romanticism, it is first necessary to summarize the Kantian conceptual legacy concerning subjectivity and art.

The main import of Kant's philosophy, which he himself has described as effecting a "Copernican revolution" because of the extent to which it challenged pre-existing assumptions, concerns, primarily, the cognitive relation of the subject to the world. Kant's philosophy effects a passage from "a mimetic relation" between representation and the world to a "transcendental relation of formation", where nothing can be known unless it has been pre-formed by consciousness. As a result of this, the intellectual forms which make experience and knowledge possible contain the criterion of their own truth within themselves, instead of finding their validity in an extraneous principle which they translate. As Kant abandons the dogmatic notion of a transcendent world to which knowledge should correspond, he also introduces the notion of a subjective aspiration at the root of the subject's activity of envisioning a world.

Kant's innovation, then, lies in his introduction of a subjective principle to the subject's relationship to the world, in opposition to the empiricist notion of psychological regularities derived from experience, and the empiricist reduction of

imagination to a mental copy of sensation. For Kant, knowledge of the world involves a priori synthetic principles and Ideas which cannot be derived from what is given, and knowledge becomes the product of the activity of the knower. (6) Kant's system provides a relationship between the subject and the world which can be rationally justified, and which eschews dogmatism (that is, it avoids resorting to an entity or principle which could only be posited or assumed because it would hold the justification of its link to this world-view within itself). The necessity to preserve man's freedom from being reabsorbed within a mechanical universe of natural law meant that the subject was not able, according to Kant, to know the world "as it is", but, conversely, implied the subject's shaping activity. In other words, man's freedom, in the above sense, also meant that the subject was subject to the division between the world of appearances and the 'noumenal world', i.e. a world beyond empirical reality.

Kant's philosophy involves a dualism in the sense that it forbids an identification between the legitimate knowledge within the epistemological world and things in themselves. It may be described as the assertion of disengaged thought, which has the capacity to rule over its domain in a reflexive manner, but cannot give a full account of this very disengagement. Similarly, knowledge as Kant defines it, implies the impossibility for the reflexive subject to have a direct access to its intelligible faculties. For Kant, there can be no intellectual intuition, defined, in Bowie's terms as "a self-caused intuition of the

self-caused synthesizer of intuitions". (7) For Kant, reflexive thought does not possess the potential to be the subject that is not merely appearance, i.e., the transcendental subject as he envisages it. Glover argues that "Kant thought Descartes was wrong, in his proof of his own existence, to suppose that our stream of consciousness tells us anything about our self as it really is". (8) For Kant, the empirical subject has access only to its apparent self:

> We must also recognize, as regards inner sense, that by means of it we intuit ourselves only as we are inwardly affected by ourselves; in other words, that, so far as inner intuition is concerned, we know our own subject only as appearance, not as it is in itself. (9)

The limitation of the notion of the subject who, defined as representing a world to itself, can, however, only have access to an appearance of itself, has been underlined by Michel Henry. According to Henry, Kant

> critiques the Being of this subject in such a way that anything one might advance about this Being includes a paralogism, so that if, in spite of everything, it must be spoken about, one can only say that it is an 'intellectual representation.'(10)

The subject can have no more access to the world as it is than to that which conditions his knowing activity, that is, to his intelligible capacity. The highest point of philosophy cannot be articulated by philosophy, in other words, the subject cannot give a full account of its own nature.

In a simultaneous movement, Kant was, however, led to take into account the prerequisites which his notion of knowledge as a system of structural adequacy between mind and world entailed. In the *Critique of Judgement* (1790), in which he analyses the teleological and the aesthetic judgments, Kant investigates the issue of an access to the ground of knowledge and to the subject's intelligible nature in its world-shaping activity. Although Kant has conceived a dualistic notion of knowledge, where disengaged reflexive thought cannot retrieve the link between the thinking being and the object that is thought, he nevertheless examines the adequate relationship between the subject and the world, as a condition of possibility of knowledge which should be assumed.

Aesthetics and the autonomy of art

Although for Kant it is impossible to know that the world as it is conforms to the knowing mind, cognition could not take place if, for the sake of cognition's purposes, the world could not be envisaged as a whole which itself is not merely the sum of accumulated knowledge. This is the basis of Kant's notion of the transcendental imagination. Moreover, the need for coherence also requires that perceptions be ascribed to one originary self-consciousness or 'transcendental ego'. The transcendental ego cannot be the object of cognition, and only the result of its operations can be described. (11) Although the transcendental imagination and the transcendental ego prevent consciousness from

disintegrating into the various objects of which it is conscious, Kant has limited the empirical subject's access to these principles.

It appears, then, that Kant's system requires the very affirmation which the system can countenance only in a conditional mode, both because it is required as a condition, and because, as such, it cannot be verified by the world which it conditions. In effect, it remains suspended. In other words, Kant's philosophy cannot demonstrate that mind and world should somehow conform to each other and that the subject may relate to itself as other than a function of synthesis. For Kant, the ability to relate to the world in a purposeful manner as a grand design, that is to say, in a way that differs from cognition, is manifested in art. (12) According to Seyhan, although "concepts of reason, that is, ideas cannot be translated into forms intuitable to sense, ... [I]n the *Critique of Judgment*, a measure of reconciliation is enacted between sensibility and reason". (13) For Kant, art and the beautiful provide a sensuous intuition of Ideas (where Ideas are understood as the universal and necessary content of mind as it shapes the world of possible experience).

It should be stressed that the fact that the world can be seen as a whole, and as though it were ruled by a purpose, and therefore fits the subject's aspirations, shows the extent to which the subject is not wholly separate from the objectivity which reflection opposes to it. The metaphorical role of the

notion of organism (14) lies in the fact that beauty indicates that nature becomes susceptible to freedom. According to Bowie, "the only empirical access to the intelligible and ethical basis of the rational being will be via aesthetic ideas". (15) This constitutes the specificity of art. However, simultaneously, this specificity also confirms the limitations of Reason. This is made evident by the fact that, for Kant, the work of art cannot be reduced to a technical, rationalized or causal explanation. The work of the mind of genius "nearly embodies ideas." (16) However, the genius cannot give an account of that in which art consists. For Kant, nature gives the rule to art. As a result, the artwork's coming into existence cannot be described theoretically, (17) otherwise it would merely amount to another instance of the way in which, like cognition, the subject determines the world through categories. The aesthetic idea, as a representation to which no concept is adequate, is the counterpart of the rational idea, to which no intuition can be adequate. Art is, therefore, the manifestation of a relation between subject and world which cannot be translated in any other terms. However, beauty can only suggest that nature is accessible to freedom in a symbolical way, and by analogy.

Kant has also insisted on the particular pleasure in which the aesthetic experience consists. In the enjoyment of the beautiful and in the experience provided by works of art, the world is envisaged in a non-instrumental and disinterested manner, where the subject relates to the aspect of the objects which the imagination reflects. What the subject enjoys in the experience

of art and of the beautiful, then, is his or her own shaping activity. Art is also seen by Kant as bearing witness to a suprasensible unity of all our faculties. This, it may be argued, is as close as the subject can get to its own intelligible nature. The latter is made most manifest in that the pleasure that the artwork brings is the pleasure of pure representation, in which the imagination is no longer regulated by the constraints of the Understanding. It presents a free relation to the world for its own sake. This is the notion that Deleuze offers, from the perspective of the subject's faculties:

> if the faculties can, in this way, enter into relationships which are free and variable, but regulated by one of them, it must follow that all together are capable of relationships which are free and unregulated, where each goes to its own limit and nevertheless shows the possibility of some sort of harmony with the others... Thus we have in the *Critique of Judgment* the foundation of Romanticism. (18)

The free relation to the world is also the full demonstration of the subject's faculties in its plenitude. In the process of examining that which the cognitive relation to the world requires for its basis, Kant's system comes close to describing a relationship which escapes the limitations of knowledge. Kant's notion of art, therefore, constitutes a outlet for the subject's need to access the life of the mind. As a direct relation in the form of intellectual intuition is impossible, the value and content offered by art lie in this metaphorical status and in preserving the meaning of "what it would be like if freedom could be realized." (19) That art "strives towards something beyond the boundary of experience" (20) is also indicated by the fact that

in the enjoyment of beauty, the mind "becomes auto-telic", i.e., refers to no exterior object or experience in the outside world.

For Kant, art is attendant upon the impossibility of the divine perspective which intellectual intuition would be. The notion of the autonomy of art, for Kant, resides in the tension inherent in art's claim for a world that is different from this world, and which cannot, therefore, take place in it. This is the division which German idealism intends to collapse. Kant had reached a point in his philosophy where he had to suggest the extent to which subject and object had to be assumed to belong together, while taking care to withdraw this domain from knowledge. This is, however, the suggestion on which the German idealists, and, in particular Schelling, based their philosophy which gave art a crucial role.

German Idealism

Kant had argued that beautiful nature may be said to be endowed with a sense of purpose, which is manifested by the fact that the subject is affected by the object. This may lead to the assumption of a unity between subject and object. Whereas, for Kant, art evokes what the world would be like if freedom from the division between subject and object could be realized, for Schelling, art embodies this unity as it is not accessible to reflexive thought. Schelling's ambitious claims for art are a consequence of the perceived limitation of the world to which

reflexive thought gave access. This limitation could be overcome if the object could be identified with the way in which it is known, and this is what the work of art achieves, in Schelling's view. The work of art offers the vision whereby, while being a determined object, it can be recognized as the product of a free subjective activity. Schelling's conception of art, then, derives from a need to retrieve the larger context from which reflexive thought has separated itself, and from the realization that the subject cannot be defined exclusively by reflection. It is part of an attempt to circumvent or undermine the determining aspect of thought, and to move away from the model of reflection as "the way in which a self engenders itself as a subject." (21)

For Schelling, in exceeding any discursive account, art provides a unity which reflexive thought is unable to match, and the work of art is, therefore, seen as a product that is inseparable from its meaning. This means that the finite artwork embodies a purpose which cannot be known but only intuited, and that art is the non-conceptual medium, combining consciousness and unconsciousness, which reveals the relationship between world and subject as other than liable to the divisions of reflexive thought. Art is the demonstration that the principles of imagination are the same as the principle of the productivity of Nature. For German idealism, the free expression of a free relation to the world which art still represents for Kant, becomes the document of a deeper relation between the subject and nature. It is objectified intellectual intuition or, in Bowie's terms, "metaphysical presence". (22)

Schelling's claims for art rely on the argument that the work of art transcends what reflexive thought can achieve. Schelling sees art as showing the unity between subject and object, or Absolute, which philosophy cannot, and comes to be understood as a kind of knowledge. Schelling, as noted by Breazeale,

> was prepared to employ this same term [intellectual intuition] in a much broader sense to designate an allegedly "higher", non-sensible type of "direct perception" of objective reality.... a special "faculty of truth" possessed by at least some individual human beings. It is this sense of "intellectual intuition" which attracted the attention of Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel and finally led Schelling himself to assert that "art is the organon of philosophy". (23)

Here, the distinctions established by Kant have been collapsed by Schelling to produce a kind of direct realism : "the artist represents to us a kind of absolute knowledge", so that "[P]oetry has once more collapsed into some sort of science, and has forfeited the autonomy which Kant so carefully created for it." (24) Art is no longer the formalization of the subject's aspiration to the realization of freedom, but the demonstration that thought need not remain limited and separate from its knowledge of the link between the sensible and the intelligible. This point has been underlined by Seyhan, for whom, "in [Schelling's] work the problematic status of representation reaches a closure. In the final analysis, artistic representation becomes identical with reality, and philosophy, therefore, culminates in art". (25) Art allows us to grasp a simple absolute unity where everything coheres. From Schelling's conception of the role of art, it becomes possible to understand how the totality of reality can be explained in spiritual terms,

as unfolding according to an inner necessity, and to draw a connection between this tradition of idealism and a strand of literary symbolism which heralds the poet as possessing the absolute knowledge of the spiritual reality borne out by analogies or "correspondences".(26) The symbol is the testimony of the intelligibility of every part or element in relation to the whole, a testimony to the fact that everything coheres, and this is no longer a conditional requirement of knowledge, as it was for Kant, but a fact verified and disclosed by the artist.

However, the role which Schelling attributes to art, that of allowing us to grasp a simple absolute unity, also leads him to assert that "there is properly speaking but one absolute work of art ...even though it should not yet exist in its most ultimate form." (27) Schelling's remark points to the discrepancy between what may be called the Work, i.e., the attainment of the totality of being as simple absolute unity, where the individual or particular entity knows itself to be meaningful, and the artwork as material object. Presumably, for Schelling, such an absolute artwork would come up to the limits of absolute unity. The work which is the means and even the operation of coming to self-consciousness interferes with this attainment and achievement, which has to remain an event of, and in, consciousness.

Transcendental subject and psychological subject

The ambiguity concerning which subject is involved in the experience of art can be seen as directly linked to the ambiguity that has been noted concerning the status of art in relation to its achievement. This section will discuss some of the difficulties involved in making the assimilation between empirical and transcendental subjects, the coming to self-consciousness of the unity between subjective and objective, consist in the achievement of the artwork. Art, for Kant, is to be linked with that aspect in the subject whereby the subject is accessible to Ideas, i.e. the universal and necessary content of mind, independently of worldly determinations. It points to the extent to which the subject is not merely an empirical entity accessible to naturalist observation, "the individual, taken up as he is in the tissue of the world", but is an autonomous subject:

> a being capable of positing itself as ideally (or ultimately) different from everything that history has made, from everything that society has conditioned, from everything that institutions have fixed, from all the future that past events have already marked or cleared the way for. (28)

Kant marks the distinction between the psychological, and philosophical or transcendental subject, by asserting that, in the artistic genius, "nature gives the rule to art" and that art proceeds from an innate disposition. Schelling offers an understanding of the artwork which allows the empirical subject to transcend its limitations. Kant's distinctions have been

blurred by those who inherited his system, as Sychrava, referring to Claud Sutton, notes in her analysis of Schiller:

> Claud Sutton, in *The German tradition in philosophy*, accuses the post-Kantian idealists of a sloppy attitude to words:'by the misuse of the words "ego" and "self-consciousness" they frequently leave it obscure whether they are speaking about the individual in his society or whether they are talking about some timeless absolute.'(29)

This may be due to Schelling's claim that, in art, in Breazeale's terms, "the fundamental insight of transcendental idealism (viz., the identity of the ideal and the real) becomes apparent within empirical consciousness." (30) According to Kipperman, the ambiguity between the transcendental and the psychological subject has been replaced by the assimilation of the former to the latter : "so many artists were eager to understand transcendental discussion about consciousness as discussion about the particular psychological subject." (31) This tendency may be attributed to the view held by German idealism that the artist provides not only for a spiritual world, but also for the means by which spiritual significance can be gained by any empirical subject.

Kipperman analyses "romanticism generally" by means of the notion of the psychological subject:

> The present examination of both poetic and philosophical texts will show that for romanticism generally, the being of self and world cannot be determined apart from each other. No object of its discourse rests in itself; all things _ the self, the moral and social world _ are questions because all things exist only for and within a probing dialogue within a human quester.

> In part, this indeterminability stems from Enlightenment scepticism about the ultimate status of things and of the mind. But even more it is a result of the romantics' dialectical experience of the self, which demands to be self-determining but continuously finds that it becomes itself only in encountering a world, which in its turn becomes a more meaningful place. (32)

In this passage, Kipperman is concerned with the issue of the way in which texts - without discriminating between poetic and philosophical texts - can be understood as translating an "experience of the self". The ambiguity of the status of the "things" Kipperman refers to, whether they are things in the world or things in texts, is reflected in Kipperman's shift from a use of "texts" to that of "discourse" here. The consequence of this is that the term dialectical quest, for the romantic artists, functions both as a literary motif, an aesthetic perspective or vision, and an account of experience. In the latter understanding of the quest, it is possible to detect the influence of Kant's philosophy of cognition, as the subject shapes the manifold elements supplied by sensuous intuition, the subject's finite knowledge becomes dialectical. However, it seems that the equation between the psychological and transcendental subjects leads to the assimilation of literary texts to a discourse, thereby making it difficult to understand the way in which the presumed literary translation of experience differs from experience outside all literature.

This also leads to the notion that the perspective or vision which appears to rule a work of art may function as a possible point of view upon the world outside the artwork. The equation

of the world in the text with the world outside of it tends to turn the text into a translation or expression of something that preexists it, such as, for instance, an "intellectual perspective", or a life-world to be articulated by the writer. This is one way of understanding Wheeler's analysis, when, in her study of early German romanticism, she stresses the unifying role of the artist in organising the material of the work : "the 'intellectual perspective' of the mind of a genius could provide the focus necessary to hold together an apparently miscellaneous content". (33) In this case the intellectual perspective is seen as the preserve of an individual who carries it out in a work. However, the perspective from which the artwork is said to derive also depends on the work being itself complete. The works possibly suggest a perspective, but the other way round cannot be inferred. Unless the work is seen as the translation of a preexisting vision, the question which the idealist definition of the artwork as subjective self-determination contains, is, how can the work of literature bring about the aesthetic world on which its artistic achievement itself depends? Can the psychological subject be said to reach, via the artwork, his transcendental self, if the artwork is already seen as the result of having reached it? In this discrepancy lies the hint that the poet owes his knowledge to the work of art rather than the other way round.

This may be denounced as a sleight of hand on the part of an aesthetic vision which has already settled the meaning of art in terms of harmony, and of a totality where everything finds its

place and is, eventually, rational. On the other hand, it may be argued that it is precisely Blanchot's concern to explore this discrepancy, that is, the anticipation of the work's achievement on the work itself which is recuperated in the idealist philosophy as an effect of knowledge. Blanchot's reflections on literature probe into the literary absolute, understood along the lines of the idealist artwork, and take into account the essentially romantic sense that the artwork produces a perspective from which it appears to emerge, "as though it were the absolute perspective of the world in its totality" (34), and which endows it with the effect of complete self-determination. For Blanchot, this questioning into the literary absolute took place as soon as the Jena romantics attempted to theorize it. (35) To revert to the well-known paradigm of the quest which has been traditionally employed to describe romanticism, the romantic poem understood as a psychic journey has to miss its final destination if it is to be seen as a fulfilled experience.

Literature according to Jena romanticism :

Friedrich Schlegel's various fragments ('Critical Fragments'(1797), 'Athenaeum Fragments' (1798), and 'Ideas' (1800) reveal a confidence in the value of the activity of the creative artist, which proceeds from the idea that objects can only be endowed with significance through the subject's intervention, which frees them from their uncreated naturalness. The possibility of such a position for the subject owes something

to both Fichte's and Schelling's philosophies, to the extent that they both argue that it is possible to grasp the totality of being as a simple absolute unity. In the case of Fichte's philosophy the creative process is linked to the individual finite subject's struggle towards freedom. (36) The notion of artificiality is representative of the ambitions which Jena Romanticism placed in both the work of literature and the individual artist:

> In order to be able to describe an object well, one must have ceased to be interested in it ... as long as the artist invents and is inspired he remains at least for communication in an illiberal frame of mind...(37)

In this fragment by Schlegel, Kant's notion of disinterestedness in the artwork is perceptible. Schlegel refers to the artist's detached attitude towards his material in contradistinction with mere psychological and emotional involvement. For Schlegel, the true act of creation must have led the artist to a state of indifference towards the object, so that the artist may focus only on his design. In this way, creation becomes an activity in its own right, the measure and criterion of its own truth, and independent of empirical objects. This also leads Schlegel to a decidedly instrumental view of the individual's capacities, when the latter has disengaged himself from his non-free, natural self:

> A really free and cultivated person ought to be able to attune himself at will to being philosophical or philological, critical or poetical, historical or rhetorical, ancient or modern: quite arbitrarily, just as one tunes an instrument, at any time and to any degree.(38)

This fragment suggests the eradication of the belief in a natural core within the individual, who is presented, on the contrary, as shaping himself according to a recognizable quality. This detachment, applied equally to artifacts and individuals, makes it impossible to confuse artistic creation with un-created empirical reality. Detachment signals the intervention of conscious creation within empirical reality and the connection between self-consciousness and a principle organizing multiplicity towards a final meaning.

The connection between the principle of creation and that which makes reality significant is further illustrated by Novalis in the following passage from 'Miscellaneous Writings' (1797). As will be examined in the next chapter, this passage is strikingly close to the aspiration for a unified system revolving around the subject's mind, which Shelley expresses in such prose fragments as 'Speculations on Metaphysics' (1817-21) or 'On Life' (1819):

> We are related to all parts of the universe - As we are to future and past. Which relation we develop fully, which is to be the most important and effective for us depends only on the direction and duration of our attention. A true theory of this procedure would be nothing less than the long-desired art of invention. But it would be more than this. Man acts at all times according to its laws, and there is no doubt that by means of intense self-observation it is possible for the genius to discover them.(39)

In this fragment, Novalis refers to the relations which make reality and the "parts of the universe" significant. He also refers to one relation which would summarize them all and which, if it could be the object of attention beyond immediate experience, could be equated with the "art of invention". Novalis

suggests that the law ruling man's relation to the universe could be spelt out and encapsulated in a final meaning. For Novalis, as for Schlegel, the artist is defined by his relation to this final meaning, as a rule requiring no further articulation but containing all possible relations:

> An artist is someone who carries his centre within himself. Whoever lacks such a centre has to choose some particular leader or mediator outside of himself (40)

Just as the artist is, in this fragment, defined by a structure of his personality which becomes identified with the significance which he is able to produce, similarly, individuals can be described as unfolding the principle of their character, along the same lines as an artefact like the novel, for instance:

> every human being who is cultivated and cultivates himself contains a novel within himself. But it isn't necessary for him to express and write it out. (41)

The individual is a person who is able to mould himself into a recognizable characteristic. This shaping activity is entirely presentable as this character, and has no other purpose but to be presented in this way. The hope for a final meaning to all possible relations to the universe, as instantiated in Novalis's 'Miscellaneous Writings', is accompanied by the simultaneous assertion that this meaning is entirely in its process, as conveyed by Schlegel's use of the term "cultivate". It is at this point that the romantic exhilarating creativity seems to run on empty, as if it were engaged in a project which could have been undertaken only by anticipation of its result. The presentation of spiritual significance according to its own rules becomes not

only the measure of all reality, but the equal of all reality, and if, for Novalis, "the world must be romanticised," (42) this is a demand that is made from a perspective that is already romanticised.

In his essay, 'The Athenaeum', Blanchot has stressed the kind of near-annihilation to which the subject's attainment of complete self-consciousness in and through artistic creativity (43) is brought in its success:

> this becoming self-conscious that renders literature manifest, and reduces it to being nothing but its manifestation, leads literature to lay claim...to everything, to *the whole that acts in every instant and every phenomenon* (Novalis)...only the whole that acts mysteriously and invisibly in everything. (44)

The tension around which Jena romanticism's understanding of literature revolves, appears clearly. If the relations of significance allude to one final relation (which would consist, as Novalis's fragment from 'Miscellaneous Writings' indicates, in the "art of invention" itself), they also designate this final relation as a lack, i.e., negatively. This is why Novalis refers to the "art of invention" precisely as an art, that is to say, such that it can only be derived or contrived from a design or artifice. This is why, also, Novalis can refer to such an art only in a prescriptive mode (it *would* be the art of invention). It is in the gesture of their ascription of the work of literature to the German idealist agenda, that the Jena Romantics are unable to recognize the achievement that is attributed to this work. In other words, the demand for self-determination, which is supposed to manifest the subject's freedom, and of which

the work of art is the manifestation in actuality, subjects the work to provide ever more evidence of this freedom which is, by necessity, incompatible with any finite determination. It is thus possible to understand why Friedrich Schlegel, in the Athenaeum fragment no116, defines "the romantic kind of poetry" as a poetry which cannot settle in its works:

> Other kinds of poetry are finished and are now capable of being analysed. The romantic kind of poetry is still in the state of becoming; that, in fact, is its real essence: that it should forever be becoming and never be perfected. (45)

The achievement of the work of literature is never secured. It is, then, possible to assess the modification which the notion of art and literature, as a mode of subjective self-determination in the activation of the ground common to object and subject, undergoes with Jena romanticism. As Sychrava has argued, accounts of the poem as self-critical or self-consuming are derived from the double perspective which romantic aesthetics attaches to poetry, where the poem is seen as both an object and a process of mind. Sychrava also notes that "[T]his 'objectification', whereby the critical process is also the structure of the artwork, brings about the coincidence of criticism - or theory - and poetry - or practice, so desired by the post-Kantian movement." (46) The aspect of Jena romanticism on which this analysis has focused indicates that the German romantics were simultaneously compelled to re-open and undo this coincidence. Seyhan has also noted Fichte's influence behind the notion of the self-conscious poem:

> From Fichte's transcendental schema, Schlegel derives the critical position of transcendental poetry ... Schlegel sees in the critical sensibility of poetics an aesthetic reflection on the work of art which he calls "poetry of poetry". In a proper analogy to transcendental philosophy, this poetry represents "the producer along with the product" and represents itself in all its representations.(47)

Seyhan goes on to suggest that this leads to the notion that "the aesthetic drive can only be self-referential," (48) and reflection leads to self-understanding. Here also, the picture of this self-determining subjectivity in and through art, is complicated if reflection is not only held as the subject's deliberate and free act of self-awareness, but, on the contrary as intensifying disjunction and lost identity in the realization that it "depends upon the reflected other for its being." (49) The Jena Romantics are in fact inhabited by the simultaneous sense of their engagement in a creative process whereby there is nothing unintelligible, and the awareness that this very intelligibility draws them into a process of becoming, (50) reflecting the re-emergence of multiplicity within the simple Absolute unity of being. The assessment of Jena Romanticism revolves around whether this is to be seen in terms of a dichotomy, in which case they are depicted as being dominated by longing counterbalanced by triumphant declarations, or whether the solidarity between these two aspects is stressed, in which case this non-contradiction indicates an ambiguity within literature, which Blanchot deems essential. If one reverts to the terms in which Romanticism has been defined, that is in terms of the Work, which is the attainment of an Absolute unity in self-consciousness, and the work as the demonstration of such

achievement in actuality, then, the latter cannot be seen as fulfilling the former, without reintroducing the disjunction in the process of exhibiting its power of unification, as if the work was checked in its movement from its inception. This is one way of understanding Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy's remark, couched in Blanchotian terms, on the "gesture whereby, at the very heart of the quest for, and the theory of, the Work, [Romanticism] forsakes, or, not quite willingly, subtracts the Work itself, and turns into 'the work of the absence of the Work." (51) This is the issue which Blanchot sees Jena Romanticism as addressing, in 'The Athenaeum':

> Literature encounters its most dangerous meaning - that of interrogating itself in a declarative mode - at times triumphantly, and in so doing discovering that everything belongs to it, at other times, in distress, discovering it is lacking everything since it only affirms *itself* by default. (52)

In this passage, Blanchot articulates the paradox described above around the alternative "sometimes... sometimes", where it should be understood that these two moments are simultaneously involved, and point at the central twist of literature for Blanchot, as is brought out by his own practice of writing. Blanchot's writings clearly disrupt traditional notions of genres whereby literary works are given an identity. For instance, Leslie Hill has remarked that his early novels, such as *Thomas l'obscur* and *Aminadab*, are largely made up of various internal discourses (conjecture, interpretation, commentary), which both stimulate and obliterate the narrative and the reader's own interpreting engagement with it. (53) In this way, the movement of comprehension towards unity is both enabled and frustrated, and

the addition of further discourses can never recuperate the divergence of the previous ones from certainty and determination, in accordance with the principle that "Plus une oeuvre se commente, plus elle appelle de commentaires" (The more a work comments upon itself, the more it calls for commentary). (54) The same strategy is at work in Blanchot's writings in fragments, such as *L'Ecriture du désastre* and *Le Pas au-delà*, where the relations between fragments expand the putative unity which they potentially constitute, so that the fragments do not only produce the lack of unity, (this is the extent to which they fail) but they turn this lack into a space within which they can speak.(55)

It is now necessary to turn to the issue of the way in which Jena displayed its awareness that the work of literature cannot be understood as embodying the power to survey things as a whole without exempting itself from this whole, thereby ruining its achievement in the movement of securing it. This will involve the clarification of the way in which, for Blanchot, the Romantic fragment is significant of this awareness. Blanchot's following analysis from 'The Athenaeum' may be taken as a guideline:

> Romanticism has the keenest knowledge of the narrow margin in which it can affirm itself: neither in the world, nor outside the world; master of everything, but on condition that the whole contain nothing; pure consciousness without content, a pure speech that can say nothing. A situation in which failure and success are in strict reciprocity, fortune and misfortune indiscernible. By becoming everything poetry has also immediately lost everything, thereby reaching that strange era of its own tautology where it will inexhaustibly exhaust its difference by repeating that its essence is to poeticize. (56)

As Blanchot points out succinctly in this passage, the success which allows the Romantics to assert the work as self-realization simultaneously takes away all grounds from them to do so. After examining the way in which the fragment may be held as the epitome of the work of transcendental poetry, this analysis will explore the way in which it becomes significant of the movement of literature which "inexhaustibly exhausts its difference".

Blanchot's non-romantic essence of romanticism and the fragment.

In the first instance, Blanchot indicates that the fragment represents the best hope for the Romantics to realize the total work:

> But this total novel (57) of which most of the romantics are content to dream in the manner of a fable...will be undertaken only by Novalis. And here is the remarkable trait: not only will Novalis leave this novel unfinished, but he also will sense that the only way he could have accomplished it would have been to invent a new art: that of the fragment. (58)

The hope placed in the fragment by the Romantics is then linked to the search for the whole, which Blanchot, too, sees as lying at the root of the poetical ambition, as he makes clear in *La Part du feu*:

> La recherche de la totalité, sous toutes les formes, c'est la prétention poétique par excellence, une prétention dans laquelle est incluse, comme sa condition, l'impossibilité de son accomplissement, de telle sorte que s'il lui arrive jamais de s'accomplir, c'est en tant que cela ne se peut et parce que le poème prétend comprendre dans son existence son impossibilité et son irréalisation. (59)

> The search for totality, in all its forms, is the poetical ambition par excellence. This ambition includes the impossibility of being accomplished as its condition, so that if it is ever accomplished, this can only be to the extent that it cannot be, and for this reason that the poem claims to encompass its impossibility and its non-realization within its existence.

This leads to the attempt to turn contradiction into a form which, then, becomes unassailable. The self-manifestation of the work, the declaration that it is, is supposed to preclude any opposition to it by being the simultaneous manifestation of its non-accomplishment. The paradoxical self-manifestation of the poetic work, as Blanchot understands it, may be linked to the particular efficacy of art for the Romantics, which Bowie has summarized as the shaping of what philosophy cannot do:

> if what grounds reality cannot be included with the philosophical system which tries to encompass it, then a medium in which the revelation of the failure to arrive at the final ground _ at the unconditioned _ is in some way constitutive, may be more apt for comprehending the nature of existence and truth than a self-contained philosophical system. (60)

It is possible to see the romantic fragment as the epitome of the work embodying it own movement of production, and the epitome of "self-negation as self-transcendence." (61) The fragment is the type of incompletion which is not itself a lack. Simon Critchley sees the fragment as "a form that embodies interruption within itself... a genre that embodies failure within itself." (62) In this sense, and as Walter Benjamin has underlined in the case of irony, (63) the work as a fragment is indestructible, since it contains even the failure that contributes to its incomplete completeness. Friedrich Schlegel's fragments are usually seen as

typical examples of romantic irony, as in the following: "One can only become a philosopher, not be one. As soon as one thinks one is a philosopher, one stops becoming one." (64) This leads Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy to apply the same ironical treatment to Schlegel's own definition of the fragment: "A fragment, like a miniature work of art, has to be entirely isolated from the surrounding world and be complete in itself like a hedgehog." (65)

Combining the proposition of the fragment, and the fact that this self-defining proposition takes itself as its object, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy conclude: "the fragment on the hedgehog fragment <u>is</u> such a hedgehog in the very proposition by which it simultaneously states that the hedgehog <u>is not here</u>." (66) Just as irony characterizes the proposition that circumvents the impossibility of saying that what it says is true, the fragment is the state of the work that embodies the whole through suspending the whole. The fragment's achievement forces it to produce even its own disappearance, and this, in one sense, represents Romanticism's triumph, as Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy point out: "c'est bien en n'étant pas là que le romantisme et le fragment sont absolument" (it is precisely by virtue of not being here that Romanticism and the fragment are absolutely, 67). In this way, the definition of "the novel mode of realization" which, according to Blanchot, Romanticism proposes to itself as a task, is verified on one of its sides as being "le pouvoir, pour l'oeuvre d'être et non plus de représenter, d'être tout... dans une forme qui.. ne réalise pas le tout, mais le signifie en

le suspendant" (the power, for the work to be and no longer to represent, to be as a whole ...in a form that... does not realize the whole, but signifies it in suspending it, 68). However, if the crowning achievement of the absolute work is to say nothing, not even itself, this achievement also requires that the work disowns it.

Another way of unravelling the same paradox would be to say that, if the fragment is the form that succeeds in being a failure, then it does not fail, and, consequently, it does not succeed either. The non-accomplishment that makes the fragment complete, takes, in the same gesture, even this achievement away from it. This is why, on the basis of Schlegel's own fragment, "But as yet no genre exists that is fragmentary both in form and content," (69) Critchley points out that "the 'Athenaeum Fragments' are *not* themselves fragments, they *should* not be fragments, they are merely...promissory notes for an infinite work yet to be written." (70) The fragment is then the realization that the work turns into the preparation for the Work, as Novalis suggests in the following fragment:

> The art of writing books has not yet been invented. But it is on the point of being invented. Fragments of this kind are literary seedings. Many among them may indeed be sterile - still if only some grow. (71)

In this case, Novalis's view of the fragment appears to correspond to Blanchot's description of the practice of writing in fragments as being taken for "preparations or rejected versions of what is not yet a work." (72) However, in preparing for the Work, fragments persistently designate the absence of the

Work, and make its accomplishment recede in the same measure. They are then also productive of the absence of the Work, an absence which, neither in their pronouncement, nor in the interruption of this pronouncement, they are able to counter. The more fragmentary the work, the more it divides itself up, and proliferates. Blanchot calls the intensified movement of the fragment "the fragmentary exigency", where the work that does not add up to anything - the work that does not work or "work-lessness" (désoeuvrement) manifests itself. Blanchot's statement, from which the passage previously quoted is taken, can now be quoted in full:

> The demand, the extreme demand of the fragmentary is at first obeyed lazily, as though it were a matter of stoppping at fragments, sketches, studies: preparations or rejected versions of what is not yet a work. That this demand traverses, overturns, ruins the work because the work (totality, perfection, achievement) is the unity which is satisfied with itself- this is what F. Schlegel sensed, but it is also what finally escaped him, though in such a way that one cannot reproach him with this misunderstanding which he helped and still helps us to discern in the very moment whereby we share it with him. (73)

The fragments do not let the Work happen. In interrupting itself, the fragment indicates that it is already in excess of the perfect unity towards which it strives, and that even this interruption and its silence cannot undo the damage done to it. The interruption of fragments, their fragmentariness, may then be construed as the movement whereby speech is being caught up and taken over by the worklessness which it has itself generated. It is speech that is struck dumb from having already spoken too much and too early, from having "shattered the whole." (74) As

a fragment, the Romantic Work indicates that it has already put an end to the whole to which it strove, thereby taking away the possibility of ever reaching it. In its interruption, the fragment evokes a kind of speech which might be complete, were it not destroyed by the fragment's nature as fragment. Fragments ruin the Work, and represent a process of decay within the complete Work, by indicating the ceaseless continuity of which the complete work is merely the interruption, that is to say, the interruption of itself.

Blanchot has encapsulated the solidarity between the Work and its absence, of which it is the work, and which is also its outcome, in the following passage from *The Space of Literature*:

> this moment which is like the work of the work, which outside of any signification, any historical or aesthetic affirmation, declares that the work is, depends on the work's undergoing, at this very same moment, the ordeal which always ruins the work in advance and always restores in it the unending lack of work, the vain superabundance of inertia. (75)

A number of consequences can be drawn from the insight on the romantic notion of literature which Blanchot offers. This will introduce some of the concerns which this thesis will examine in P.B Shelley's poems and prose. For Blanchot, Jena Romanticism implied the latent recognition that the Work that could be read as a totality involved in a movement which, not in contradiction with it, but in solidarity with it, did not contribute to perfecting this totality, and that such is the movement that draws the work into the process of its making. The totality appears to be reached only so that it may be at stake again

through the artwork, and this is the way in which the latter indicates that it is made in lieu of the totality. The romantic account of the work as embodying the infinite power that can survey things as a whole is accompanied by the notion that the work cannot, and must not, be this whole. Romanticism must then be seen as animated by a desire which almost brings the Work of literature to its accomplishment and destruction, although it must also resist this destruction, since the latter is not even something which could be implemented, but is, in a sense always already at work.

For Blanchot, Romanticism is the moment when literature avoids being understood along the lines of the notion of art and aesthetics offered by the Kantian and the post-Kantian philosophies, whose totalizing scheme was largely a response to the Enlightenment's theoretical disengagement of the subject from the world. The fragmentary exigency which, as Romanticism testifies, rules literature, is a type of separation which is far more radical than the disengagement to which a reconciling solution could be brought, since it does not even let disjunction gather itself, as this would be the sign of a merely ordered disorder. On the other hand, this ceaseless discontinuity does not actually prevent the idealist enterprise from healing divisions and from making the demonstration of a unifying process. On the contrary, and more damagingly, by referring this unifying process back to the disjunction which it itself represents in order to operate, the fragmentary exigency turns the idealist project into a version of itself.

The Jena Romantics were balanced between, on the one hand, the idealist assertion that the Absolute can only be known negatively and by finding that no action can reach what they are seeking, and, on the other hand, the awareness that, precisely in this way, they are already engaged in the work as worklessness. The latter allows them a space within which, in their hope to finally speak truly in the total work, they are simultaneously protected from, and exposed to, the lack of a final truth. In this way, and in its quest for the invention of the art of writing, romanticism uncovers the aspect of the work that deceives and sustains any project, and any quest, that is, the work-lessness of the work. Finally, as has been analysed, the fragmentary exigency, is, for Blanchot, the heart and soul of the notion of literature to which romanticism gives a possibility, outside the propositions of philosophy. It may be relevant to an exploration of the works of Shelley, particularly as the latter was highly responsive to the tensions arising from the philosophical debates of his time. The starting point which this research will take in carrying out such an exploration is the contribution which the notion of the literary and fragmentary exigency can make within the debate around Shelley's philosophical affinities and the role which he envisaged for poetry. As suggested, the notion of literature to which Blanchot sees Jena Romanticism open itself cannot be understood as the instrument of a re-engagement with the world as conceived by the idealist doctrine without seriously destabilising the subject's understanding of this world, and his or her action within it. This notion of literature even altered

the prior notion of a disengagement from the world, as if the solution changed the problem to which it is the solution.

CHAPTER TWO

EMPIRICISM AND SHELLEY'S 'SPECULATIONS ON METAPHYSICS'

The previous Chapter has outlined a notion of literature derived from the response which idealism meant to give to the issues arising from the Enlightenment. This Chapter will examine the role of empiricism in Shelley's notion of knowledge, as developed in the collection of essays and fragments entitled 'Speculations on Metaphysics.'

The notion of aesthetics emerged as the previous scholastic and early Enlightenment picture of a world, where unity was a priori divinely guaranteed, was abandoned, and as changes in conceptions of truth in modern thought were taking place. Aesthetics may be understood as the expression of the need to provide for a meaningfulness which the secularization and rationalization of modern thought did not address.(1) As was indicated in the previous Chapter, Kant's philosophy rests at the centre of this modern dilemma in the sense that it places the subject at the heart of the acquisition and formation of knowledge, but bars its access to the higher principle whereby the completion of knowledge could be identified with the coherence of the world. Kant's doctrine was meant to mend the fragmentariness in which empiricism and Hume's sceptical philosophy had left it. In this respect, it may be seen as part of the reaction, with which

Romanticism has been associated, against mere reasoning over observable facts. On the other hand, Kant does not eschew the dualism between the objective and the subjective domains.

Within this framework, art appears required in Kantian philosophy as the outlet for the articulation of consciousness which knowledge cannot provide. As suggested in the previous chapter, the importance which Kant gives art in his philosophy is signalled by the fact that artistic realization cannot be assimilated with knowledge. For Kant art cannot become "objectified intellectual intuition", as is the case for Schelling. That "art may be seen a bearer of truth" (2) means, for Schelling, that art has already found its truth, and is the non-theoretical exemplification of this truth, whereas, for Kant, art provides a truth whose potential claim would be to change knowledge, if only art could become knowledge, that is to say, redundant as art. That art comes close to undoing the division between objective and subjective is precisely an achievement which remains inacessible within the world of cognition. Yet without undoing this division, art would not be. Art may be seen as both working within these distinctions, and as giving them the lie. This ambiguity is at the root of the notion of the artwork's accomplishment which, in effect, performs the disappearance of the work, and has been identified as the crowning achievement of the romantic absolute work of art by Blanchot, ie, as manifesting "the power to be and no longer to represent, to be as a whole...in a form which...signifies [the whole] in suspending it." (3)

The notion of the aesthetic is set in a tension with the domain of knowledge. It may be considered as having a kind of complementary role in Kant's doctrine, where it contributes to the reinforcement of Reason, and an overarching role in transcendental Idealism, which elevates it to the unfolding, and even the revelation, of the system of the world. As has been well documented by Roberts, Shelley had access to this aspect of post-Kantian thought, (4) and in many ways, such texts as 'On Life' (1819) and *The Defence of Poetry* (1821) bear witness to Shelley's affinities with this tradition, whereby the poet's works are vindicated as making apparent to the community its own wider constitutive movement, ie, its Spirit. However, the idealist propensity in Shelley may not stand in such contrast with the strand in Shelley's intellectual make-up which has been more directly related to the philosophical doctrines of the Enlightenment, and connected to his radical political ideas (5), that it should lead to a reading of "two Shelleys".

If art is seen as addressing aspects in the subject which the modern definition of knowledge does not satisfy, then it is possible to suggest that rationalization has also contributed to bring these aspects to light and to make them more pressing to address. In this sense, through art, rationalization would come to remedy its own shortcoming. On the other hand, if knowledge does not imply the subject's alienation from the world against which romantic art was supposed to react, then art does not need to play a curative, or "therapeutic" role, to use Hugh Roberts's term. For Shelley, the redemptive virtue of art lay more

obviously in disrupting states of affairs and of knowledge which had become adverse to the "spirit of Freedom" (*A Philosophical View of Reform*), and in repealing "Large codes of fraud and woe" (*Mont-Blanc*), than in achieving the unity which the Post-Kantians envisaged. In order to explore this issue, this Chapter will deal with aspects of Shelley's conceptions of the possible knowledge of the world and of the relationship between world and subject in "Speculations on Metaphysics", and trace the influence of empiricism within these collected fragments. Kenneth Neill Cameron stresses the difficulty in dating the prose fragments gathered by Mary Shelley and entitled 'Speculations on Metaphysics'. He indicates that, together with 'Speculations on Morals', they were written over a span of four years or more. (6) According to David Lee Clark, the fragments, which he titles 'A Treatise on Morals,' were found amidst materials written as early as 1815 and as late as 1821. (7) Cameron expresses reservations over D.L. Clark's dating of items, (8) and the latter's remark that "in thought and in style [the two fragments] belong to Shelley's early prose, probably dating from 1812-1815", may be qualified by the fact that Shelley felt the need to incorporate many elements from his earlier prose speculations, including 'Speculations on Morals' within *A Defence of Poetry*, one of his later texts. (9) On the basis of the reference to Bacon in 'What Metaphysics Are', and the close relation of the fragments to *Alastor*, Timothy Clark suggests 1815 as a likely date. (10) The selection of these fragments for the present analysis, as against a more frequently discussed text such as 'On Life' (1819) for example, is motivated by the attempt to draw the value which

Shelley found in empiricism away from a contrast with his more idealistic inclinations.

Empiricism will be considered here as contributing to rationalization to the extent that it challenged the dogmatic rationalist view according to which rationality was equated to the light of nature and guaranteed by a superior, divine entity. Not only did empiricism play a major role in eradicating the superstitions which Shelley denounced, but it also was the main intellectual force in undoing schemes of unity which were abandoned as new conceptions of human independence from transcendental authority emerged. Empiricism can be seen as the doctrine which opens the rationalist intellect onto the world, and permits the notion of mind to emerge. Far from alienating the subject from the world, the empiricist emphasis on the perceiving mind revealed a whole area of experience to which the human mind was now entitled.

The main tenet of empiricist epistemology was man's faculty of receiving impressions, instead of being determined by innate factors. The analysis will focus on the implications of this principle which opens 'Speculations on Metaphysics': "We can think of nothing which we have not perceived" (11), and on the ways in which its implications can be traced in Shelley's collected fragments. The analysis will take care to differentiate this principle from one which is assimilated with the immaterialist doctrine according to which 'to be is to be perceived', thereby making the human mind the determinant of

reality. (12) On the contrary, in empiricism, the term sensation indicates a relation with the world not divorced from mental processes.

"We Can Think of Nothing Which We Have Not Perceived" (1815)

With John Locke, the definition of rationality undergoes a profound change: the domain of rationality extends as far as observation is sufficient to grasp natural laws. This implies the abandonment of any metaphysical model pre-existent to observation, and the equivalent abandonment of any transcendent entity sustaining such a model. The mind is given a domain of application for its capacities. In opening up the independent intellect of rationalism onto such a domain, empiricism has transformed intellect into mind. The mind is the transformation of the intellect in such a way that the notion of world or nature becomes relevant to it and meaningful for it.

Simultaneously, this doctrine recognizes a domain of application of its capacities for the mind. By freeing human reason from such a transcendent model, empiricism limits the domain of reason to the test of experience, and lays it open to the influence of the senses and of sensibility. Sensory perception has a prominent place in the sentence opening the first of the fragments gathered under the title 'Speculations on Metaphysics':

> It is an axiom in mental philosophy, that we can think of nothing which we have not perceived. (13)

In the above quotation, Shelley acknowledges the doctrine of empiricism which denies "the existence of axioms as principles of knowledge which are logically distinct from experience." (14) This apparently limits the domain of application of the mind to something that can be perceived. On the other hand, if that which is perceived is not understood as preceding thought, it may not be seen as limiting. At this stage, however perception is understood, it may be suggested that, with empiricism, the term perception indicates that the thought of the mind is not merely what the mind can find within itself and verify by itself.

In order to acquire a better understanding of Shelley's endorsement of empiricism, it will be necessary, first of all, to give a description of the doctrine's main points so as to underline the role it was able to play in undermining the opposition between the independent intellect understood along the lines of thinking substance on the one hand, and a pre-existing reality on the other hand. These points may be summarized as follows. First, the refutation of innate principles in man is a move toward the autonomy of the mind in its relations with the world. Second, Locke's doctrine reverses the guarantee of reality offered by rationalism. Third, as the mind is considered as an object of science, man is put back into the natural world.

1) The Refutation of Innate Principles in Man as a Move Towards the Autonomy of the Mind in its Relations With the World.

Empiricism was a critical project which put into question the 17th-century model of knowledge. According to this model, the nature of knowledge was to be understood in terms of the ideas which the mind found within itself. These ideas insured a correspondence between the subject and the object. The truth of these ideas can be perceived, and this verification requires an individual inner sense or 'natural light' that is universally shared. Locke's angle of attack against this doctrine was primarily moral: he denied the existence of a law of conscience testifying to the greater light by which the mind of man had been invested before his fall. Empiricism put into question the validity of a knowledge which was ultimately guaranteed by a "Deus ex machina" allowing for the capacity in man to perceive truth, and which left the door open to superstition and arbitrariness. On the contrary, empiricism asserted the independence of the human mind from supernatural influence.

As Yolton has suggested, the contribution of empiricism was not so much that it objected to innate ideas, as that it made innate ideas redundant in accounting for human knowledge. (15) Locke's doctrine aimed at settling knowledge on its own basis, without reference to the "light of nature", which was then considered as an outside arbiter. (16) On the contrary, to determine the objects which were commensurate with human knowledge became one of the concerns of empiricism. (17) With the empiricist emphasis on the notion of a world or of nature which is seen as meaningful in relation to the mind, thoughts which are derived from sense

impressions do not represent pre-existing things, but describe a relation to things.

For the empiricists, the powers of the human mind had to be examined, before the objects to which the mind has access could be determined. With the elimination of innate principles, the mind ceased being seen as something like a finished structure that merely needed to verify a truth which it was part of its makeup to ascertain, to the extent that a transcendental entity guaranteed it. On the contrary, the mind's potential and its capacity for progress were emphasised. To assert, as empiricism did, that knowledge consisted of something else than the mind's self-verified truth, also meant that the mind was above all the capacity to come into its own powers, as is also asserted by Shelley:

> That which the most consummate intelligence that have adorned this mortal scene inherit as their birthright, let us acquire (For it is within our grasp) by caution (18)

The scope of the mind is not pre-determined, or, in other words, the mind is no longer seen as thinking substance. That which the mind can think is not envisaged as a pre-existing content to which the capacity of the mind would measure up. This may be linked to the notion of science as empiricism promoted it. Science implies a mind that is no longer closed upon its procedures of self-verifying truth accorded by a superior entity, because, on the contrary, it provides knowledge that can be looked into. In this sense, science applies to phenomena that are

given a reality of which the mind can take account. Science follows observed facts: it is both method and content.

2) Locke's Doctrine Reverses the Guarantee of Reality Offered by Rationalism.

Empiricism was opposed to the rational definition of knowledge, which was concerned not with what happens to be the case, but with what cannot be otherwise. For a rationalist like Descartes, it was impossible to distinguish real sensations from imaginary ones by a direct inspection, because sensations were caused by the action of bodies whose existence we are assured of not by sensation, but by thought. (19) It could be said that the imaginary was a category which the rationalist intellect did not deal with, since it was not meant to measure the degree of reality of something but to ascertain truth. On the contrary, according to Locke, all sensations and all our simple ideas were real. The reality of these sensations was not guaranteed by the certitude of thought against the testimony of the senses, but by the fact that these sensations were subject to no voluntary intervention from the subject. In other words, from Descartes to Locke, the guarantee of reality shifted from being equated with the truth which only the intellect could find in itself, to being reduced to the non-intervention and the passivity of the senses. Empiricism seemed to limit the activity of this apparently naturalized mind. In other words, it seemed that the mind could

be recognized as autonomous from supernatural influence, only at the risk of appearing passive within the natural world.

On the other hand, with empiricism, the senses need not be described as passive, at least not in the sense in which rationalism understood it. Empiricism need not be seen as favouring passive senses against rationalism's active intellect, since, as suggested, this intellect itself, dependent as it was on a divine entity, was no longer active for empiricism. The activity of the mind was linked to its capacity for progress. In fact, in both empiricism and rationalism, the concepts of passivity and activity underwent modifications: the passivity that was implied within the empiricist definition of the mind no longer corresponded to the inertness which characterized matter for the immaterialists (for whom the immaterial principle of soul explained animation and life). The apparent naturalization of the mind implied in Locke's doctrine could not have occurred without contemporaneous advances in science, which transformed the very definition of nature itself. This transformation was brought about by the incorporation of the notion of force in the definition of matter. As a result, "when the new concept of matter is put in place of the old one, the radical difference between matter and spirit disappears." (20) This shift affected the guarantee of sure knowledge within the analytical method of natural science, and also within empiricism. This guarantee could no longer lie exclusively in the innate principles of the mind at the expense of phenomena (where perception of phenomena was held as potentially deceptive). On the contrary, the phenomena,

or facts, upon which the principles of the new science were based, were given a reality as something to observe, in both the senses of watching and following.

3) The Mind is Considered as an Object of Science and Man is put back into the Natural World

The intuitive rationality which had dominated the definition of man had set him outside of nature. With empiricism, on the contrary, as long as the laws of nature could be grasped by observation and experience, there was no need for an innate principle in the mind. As Ernest Tuveson has summarized it, Locke's doctrine was an epistemological revolution in which the locus of reality was transferred to the perceiving mind. (21) That the mind may be perceiving implies that it is part of its definition that it does not deal only with itself. The mind did not consist only in a procedure such as the Cartesian intellect had followed to verify its indubitable existence. With empiricism, it may be suggested, the mind thinks that which is not already or purely a thought.

Because empiricism claims that the world is the domain where the mind can exercise its capacities, a science which is based on observation means that the mind which observes the object of science also observes, ie, contemplates and follows, the way of knowledge. Science is always science of real objects, of objects that are appropriate to the mind. This may explain why, in the

following passage of 'Speculations on Metaphysics', the issue does not revolve around the division between the world and the mind, a division which is susceptible of articulations, some of which may be deemed more true than others, but between "words" and "facts":

> Logic or the science of words must no longer be confounded with metaphysics or the science of facts (...). Nor have those who are accustomed to profess the greatest veneration for the inductive system of Lord Bacon adhered with sufficient scrupulousness to its regulations. They have professed indeed (and who has not professed?) to deduce their conclusions from indisputable facts. How came many of those facts to be called indisputable? What sanctioning correspondence unite a concatenation of syllogisms? Their promises of deducing all systems from facts has too often been performed by appealing in favour of these pretended realities to the obstinate preconceptions of the multitude; or by the preposterous mistake of a name for a thing. (22)

In this passage, the term "facts" can be said to be part of the conceptual framework of empirical science. It also enables Shelley to make a point about the notion of the objectivity of science. Shelley asserts the existence of a science of facts as implicitly opposed to the variability of words. He disputes the notion of "indisputable facts" against those who have called facts a mere play of language. In this way, he combats both mere verbal disputes, and the fallacy which consists in making words pass as realities or facts. Shelley maintains the greatest separation between language and the reality which it is supposed to designate in order to resist language's tendency to perpetuate conventions, and the false authority of custom. (23) The science of facts is therefore a science that will never come across anything that is a fact in itself, but only something that is

called one. In calling logic "the science of words", Shelley seems to have adopted the empiricist tendency to eliminate the difference between the conceptual content of ideas, and other kinds of intuition, such as the intuition of emotional states. This move makes concepts susceptible of a cultural or ideological construction since, on the other hand, Shelley cannot subscribe to the view which would turn an incontrovertible intuition into a fact. (24) Concepts are no more, and no less, indisputable than the evidence derived from the introspection into our mental states. For Shelley the persuasiveness which may be attached to either forbids them from turning into facts which would limit the exercise of the mind's capacities. From this analysis, it appears that Shelley has used the objectivity with which the empirical notion of "fact" can be credited, including support from Bacon, in order to offer a notion of open-ended objectivity.

In this passage, Shelley also makes use of the critical thrust of empiricism against former metaphysical systems. In the empirical tradition, observation was opposed to metaphysical explanations, which were considered as unreliable speculations that sought final causes and were unworthy of a science which dealt with verifiable knowledge. So the paradox of Shelley's reintroduction of the term 'metaphysics', instead of the expected 'physics', within a context which overtly acknowledges and supports the empirical doctrine, is particularly striking. Yet, clearly, Shelley does not yield to unverifiable metaphysics: he conforms to the conception of sure knowledge available within the limits of the observable world, a conception inherited from the

spirit of the Encyclopaedia (the analytical dictionary compiled by progressive French writers in the 18th century). (25) This is so much so that, when he characterizes his understanding of the Universe in the following terms:

> A catalogue of all the thoughts of the mind, and all their possible modifications, is a cyclopaedic history of the universe. (26)

he means to rule out the same conjectures as Jean d'Alembert, one of the "encyclopedists", in his *Eléments de philosophie*:

> The supreme Intelligence has drawn a veil before our feeble vision which we try in vain to remove. It is a sad lot for our curiosity and our pride, but it is the lot of humanity. We should conclude therefrom at any rate that the systems, or rather the dreams of the philosophers on most metaphysical questions deserve no place in a work exclusively intended to contain the real knowledge acquired by the human mind. (27)

However, the implications of Shelley's statements are twofold. First, the domain which d'Alembert has excluded from "the real knowledge acquired by the human mind", something that might have been called 'speculations on metaphysics' in d'Alembert's time, has been reappropriated as real knowledge by Shelley. By calling a science which appears to follow the strict principles of empiricism 'metaphysics', Shelley makes the gesture of breaking the limit beyond which a materialistic version of empiricism could not go. Such a break is possible because there is no possibility of verifying our knowledge against an outside world which would also be somehow accessible. The mind has therefore always all the knowledge of which it is capable. The combinations of thoughts to which Shelley refers ("The most astonishing combinations of poetry, the subtlest deductions of logic and

mathematics, are no other than combinations which the intellect makes of sensations according to its own laws") (28) are not due to a felt discrepancy with an outside world, and a discrepancy which it would be the role of progress to reduce. With this view of the world coming up to the limit of our mind, and without an exterior criterion against which thoughts could be measured, mind and world evolve concomitantly. New thoughts are not brought about from the perception of a need for them, and cannot be anticipated, but are always latent. According to this analysis, empiricism has been identified as the philosophical doctrine which contests the conception of the mind as closed upon itself, and relying on an objectified view of thoughts. The latter aspect of the empiricist critique played an important part in Shelley's view that the thoughts of the mind cannot be mistaken for things.

Some similarities between Shelley's views and those of the German idealists can be noted, to the extent that the latter's doctrine went as far as equating the mind with the reality made available to it. However, Shelley refrained from taking the idealist step of arguing that this reality was available because the mind matched the principle of its production. Inheriting the Kantian notion of reason which could not be reabsorbed in the world of natural laws, Fichte claimed that the first principle of knowledge, or freedom, could be derived as a structure, from the history of consciousness. Man is free to the extent that the transcendent forces which condition consciousness (the "Absolute Ego") cannot themselves be brought down to the level of consciousness, as Kant also claimed. For Fichte, "[B]eyond

consciousness, the mind had no real object to focus on," (29) a view with which Shelley's statement that "the mind cannot be considered pure" (30) tallies to some extent. Shelley is also close to Kant, who "discounted an intuition based solely on the use of pure categories without the schemata of the sensibility employed as well." (31)

On the other hand, with Schelling, for freedom to cease being an abstract principle that could merely be derived from the history of consciousness, as was the case with Fichte, it had to be identified not only with the principle of knowledge, but with the principle of reality. (32) Schelling's move to identify the domain of knowledge with the domain of freedom also fits Shelley's view that knowledge is the real world of the mind. However, the absence of an exterior criterion, which allowed Shelley to claim the latter also prevented him from seeing free man as "a free source of the facts", as young Schelling did. (33) It could be suggested that, from the evidence offered in 'Speculations on Metaphysics', according to Shelley, the mind cannot be considered pure, but there is no need to separate freedom from knowledge. Knowledge is the real world of the mind, because the mind cannot be considered pure. Shelley does not aim at the certainty of intellectual intuition which both Fichte and Schelling opposed to the consciousness of things in time and space. His views do not aim to make freedom entirely represented in and as the world. Shelley's intellectual philosophy may be described as a kind of phenomenalism, assimilating as it does all

talk of things perceived to talk of actual or possible experience. (34)

'Speculations on Metaphysics,' for Shelley, are nothing but verifiable facts: thoughts are of the mind only if they are simultaneously of the world: they are not the mental representations of a pre-existing world. Shelley's views appear similar to those which Novalis offers in the following passage from 'Logological Fragments', where, in Novalis's case, the term "spirit" indicates the poet's wish to identify the mind's and the world's activity:

> What is nature? An encyclopedic systematic index or plan of our spirit. Why should we be content with the mere catalogue of our treasures - let us examine them for ourselves - and work with them in diverse ways...
>
> Everything seems to stream inward into us, because we do not stream outwards. We are negative because we want to be - the more positive we become, the more negative will the world around become - until at last there will be no more negation - but instead we are all in all. (35)

The difference between Shelley and Novalis in this connection is that, whereas the latter sees the equation of the activity of the mind with that of the world as the objective of a task for the mind to derive "spirit" from the "catalogue", the former evokes the identity of the thoughts of the mind and of the history of the universe as mirroring terms or names, without any further resolution. Shelley resists turning either the material universe or the mind into an immovable principle or activity from which our conceptions must be ultimately derived. Since, for Shelley, "we can think of nothing which we have not perceived", and

perception does not imply a pre-existing world, it must, then correspond to a limit within thought.

Finally, Shelley's vindication of "the inductive system of Lord Bacon" has two implications. Bacon had become the figurehead of British science and philosophy in the 18th century. What is now designated as "Anglo-Saxon Empiricism" found its roots in Bacon's opposition to the Ramist doctrine of a simple correspondence between the mind and the world tantamount to a transparent order of things. (36) In contrast, the Baconian method emphasised the limitation placed upon the mind's intuitive apprehensions, and the role of experiment and induction in correcting the mind's tendency to mix up its own nature with the nature of things. (37) Shelley's rejection of a distinction between mental and external reality need not prevent him from vindicating Bacon's authority. On the contrary, rigor in the attention to facts, and in deduction independently of the imposition of mental constructions, could be used in the service of a view which did not distinguish between the two, since one set of terms could be used in the place of the other. On the other hand, and as Timothy Clark has convincingly argued, Shelley also denounced the forms of philosophy which based the validity of their principles merely on the universality of the use of words, as is the case with Thomas Reid's School of Common Sense.(38) Whereas, for Reid, universal rules could be obtained through the inductive method within the confines of mechanics, astronomy or optics, (39) the validity of the mental was based only on the convictions which the individual found within himself:

> What convinces myself that I have an idea of power is, that I am conscious that I know what I mean by that word...(40)

The appeal to unverifiable conviction, relying only on a pre-existent consensus about words, was the paradoxical outcome of the Baconian concern to avoid the imposition of a single method upon both nature and the mind (an imposition implied in Ramist doctrine). On the contrary, and as has been suggested earlier, Shelley combines the apparently antithetical notions of metaphysics and of the Baconian system, because, for him, metaphysics no longer equals unverifiable knowledge. Far from applying a method to a domain for which it had not been intended, Shelley cannot assume the distinction between the moral and the material domains. Shelley retains the notion of sure knowledge of objects which are commensurate with the human mind, but the limit upon the scope of knowledge which this notion implies, has become provisional and indefinitely expandable, to the point of containing the "whole catalogue of existence", because it is not a limit which can be imposed from outside upon the mind.

> Metaphysics is a word which has been so long applied to denote an inquiry into the phenomena of mind, that it would justly be considered presumptuous to employ another. But etymologically it is very ill adapted to express the science of mind. It asserts a distinction between the moral and the material universe which it is presumptuous to assume. Metaphysics may be defined as the science of all that we know, feel, remember and believe inasmuch as our knowledge, sensations, memory and faith constitute the universe considered relatively to human identity. (41)

The limit, if any, which Shelley sets to human knowledge seems more in line with the conception voiced by Fontenelle, for whom knowledge can be measured by the extent of the human world: "Our

knowledge has certain limits beyond which the human mind was never able to go... the rest is for other worlds where things we know are unknown." (42) In the process, Shelley has reclaimed the domain of physics into metaphysics, turning the definition of metaphysics as the concern with a priori knowledge not subject to shifting empirical perceptions into its opposite, or, which amounts to the same thing, making perceptions, memory etc, as certain as a priori knowledge. While these views oppose the conception of external substance, Shelley's atheism also excludes any notion of a Berkeleyan all-wise Spirit regulating the whole system of being.

In this respect, Shelley's views can be compared with those of Jacobi, who disputed Kant's separation between appearances and things in themselves, because, Jacobi claimed, Kant would have needed a higher standpoint from which to separate them. This casts doubt on the intelligibility of being which philosophical systems can offer because "philosophical understanding does not reach beyond its own production." (43) As Shelley states above, metaphysics is nothing but the universe "considered relatively to human identity". He appears, at least in this passage, to eschew such concerns as Jacobi's with "that which cannot be explained" as the final purpose of explanation, (44) and would, presumably, no longer be relative to human identity.

Shelley's statement that "we can think of nothing which we have not perceived" seems to support Locke's doctrine of knowledge, according to which ideas are derived from sensations, as long as

objects of perception are not understood as pre-existing their perception. The notion of "derivation" was at the core of the misrepresentation of Locke's doctrine as sensationalism.(45) With Shelley's claim that the mental and the external universe could not be distinguished, there could be no derivation in the sense of causation, since neither term in the relationship can be declared prior to the other.

Cause, Motive, and Meaning.

The role given to the sensory origin of ideas in Shelley's transformation of empiricism serves to oppose the dualism between mind and matter as the basis for an explanation of perception. The attack on such dualism was the aspect in Hume and in Drummond's *Academical Questions* (1805) which, as Pulos has demonstrated, appealed to Shelley. Deleuze's remark underlines the function of the sensory origin of ideas in Hume's own transformation of empiricism:

> The point of view on the origin [of ideas], according to which any idea is derived from a pre-existing impression and stands for it, is not as important as it has generally been taken to be. It merely gives the mind a simple origin, and it prevents ideas from representing things, with which one could hardly understand how ideas might bear any resemblance. (46)

The representative theory of ideas, according to which ideas represent pre-existing things, is under attack through the notion of derivation. On the other hand, the emphasis on the perceiving mind should not be taken as a step towards the materialistic

consideration of men seen only as matter under different situations. As Yolton has shown, even La Mettrie's extreme materialism, as in his *L'Homme machine*, (1798) cannot be understood in those terms :

> the body machine is not the same as l'homme machine" the latter is the body machine after it has acquired the "human" properties of thought and feeling. The one-substance language he [La Mettrie] sometimes uses does not result in a reduction of all properties to one sort. (47)

In other words, the dependence of mental events upon physiological events, which a materialist like La Mettrie believed in, does not mean "a metaphysical monism of qualities." (48)

If, as is the case for the materialists, the soul is in truth the body in its aspects of thinking, feeling and willing, then, to believe and to judge are as natural as to breathe and to walk. Reason has become, as it has for Hume, 'a quiet kind of passion'. Shelley's definition of metaphysics as "the science of all that we know, feel, remember, and believe" can be understood in terms of a similar levelling down of reason, without, however, ascribing a determining role to sensory perceptions. The most reductive conception of the mind was offered by Hume, who saw the mind as a mere flux of perceptions, and describes ideas as "contents of awareness". If according to Hume, "nothing is ever really present with the mind but its perceptions" (49) then, consequently "there can be no mind without some idea." (50) Yet the fact that the dependence of ideas on sensory perceptions leads Hume to describe the mind as a flux, ie, as the prey of

shifting impressions, indicates the extent to which Hume still saw in the mind some kind of faculty acting as a centre or basis which is static enough to undergo shift and movement. In 'Speculations on Metaphysics', Shelley casts no doubt on the mind's perceptions in themselves, since the mind cannot test itself against that which is not the mind.

When the empiricist view of the mind is taken to its full consequences, the issue of causation and motive does not involve free will, but is rather a matter of accumulating explanatory facts describing regularities. Such was Shelley's view in 1811, when he wrote *Queen Mab*:

> The word liberty, as applied to mind, is analogous to the word chance as applied to matter: they spring from an ignorance of the certainty of the conjunction of antecedents and consequents...(51)

This conception of the human will opposed the notion of volition as ultimately independent of the perception of determining motives, where, as in Godwin's necessarian philosophy, motive means "the discerned goodness of a particular end." (52) Freedom consists in obeying a determining motive. This 'necessarian' conception ascribed efficacy to such a perception, which it did not distinguish from understanding. In this respect, to be perceived meant to be understood.

These views can be seen as closely related to those which Shelley held in 'Speculations on Metaphysics,' indicating the continuity of his thought. First, they imply that, as volition can be entirely reducible to observable regularities, the word liberty

only stands for the ignorance of that which has not been explained in this way yet. Liberty, then, only names the limit of a system of explanation or articulation which the mind's movement displays, but it cannot be objectified into an independent capacity in man. More importantly, liberty can also be seen as naming the "ignorance of the certainty" of any system of explanation to the extent that, as a system, it cannot explain how it "relate[s] to the world outside [its] axioms." (53) This also means that our knowledge does not allow us to anticipate that which is unknown to us, or that which the mind can achieve.

However, agency, and, more generally, psychological acts, could not be explained by a single law of association of sense impressions, such as the 18th-century philosopher Hartley had proposed with his mechanist theory of vibrations. As Yolton has pointed out, this theory could not explain how vibrations can have meaning, that is ,"how they can represent for us the objects to which we want to refer." (54) In contrast to Hartley's position, Hume's systematic examination of human nature took the notion of the socially agreed meaning of actions as its basis. The study of the motives of men's actions was the study of the meaning of their ideas. Consequently, men's actions also embodied truth claims, but truth was not based on the representative theory of the resemblance between ideas and their objects, but on the distinction between ideas.

The notion of "discernment" is present in the more literary context of Shelley's review of T.J. Hogg's *Memoirs of Prince Alexy Haimatoff* (1814):

> The science of mind to which history, poetry, biography serve as the materials consists in the discernment of shades and distinctions where the unenlightened discover nothing but a shapeless and meaningless mass. The faculty for this discernment distinguishes genius from dullness.(55)

In this passage, Shelley sees the science of mind as an enlightenment, in contrast with which "the unenlightened" can be compared with those who, in the Age of Reason, were ruled by unexamined and mostly religious principles. What this particular kind of enlightenment reveals, are "shades and distinctions" as opposed to "a shapeless and meaningless mass". By virtue of the parallel which Shelley makes here, the apparent aesthetic import of that which is revealed (conveyed by the notions of shade and shape as opposed to "dullness") is given a status that is equivalent to that of Reason in the age of secularization as a guide in the understanding of the world. Simultaneously, it may be argued that the vision of the world which the science of mind allows is not specifically aesthetic, as the terms "discernment", "distinctions" and "discover" may equally apply to sensory perception, mental judgment or aesthetic appreciation. This recalls the equivalence between all faculties which Shelley proposes in some passages of 'Speculations on Metaphysics', as previously discussed. At the same time, this suggests that the vision - any vision, that is, any frame of understanding - whereby a world rather than a "meaningless mass" may be envisaged, is already aesthetic. Discernment is an activity of

shaping that is equivalent to the discovery of material which is commensurate with the human mind. This view is close to Kant's point that for knowledge to be something else than a mere accumulation of data, it had to be underlaid by a unity which itself could not be derived from that which is known. However, there is no hint that this unity may be embraced as a whole.

The insufficiency of the mechanist theory of perception, according to which perception is caused directly by what is perceived, also appears in Shelley's account of the idea of other individual minds in the 'Speculations on Metaphysics'. In the consideration of the problem of the existence of other minds, the danger of solipsism was encountered by many philosophers, among whom Descartes and Locke, who admitted that objects of sense experience are mind-dependent. Shelley also alludes to this issue in the following passage:

> Our evidence, with respect to the existence of other minds, is founded upon a very complicated relation of ideas which it is foreign to [the] purpose of this treatise to anatomise. The basis of this relation is undoubtedly, a periodical recurrence of masses of ideas, which our own voluntary determinations, have, in one particular direction, no power to circumscribe or to arrest, and against the recurrence of which they can only imperfectly provide. The irresistible laws of thought constrain us to believe that the precise limits of our actual ideas are not the actual limits of possible ideas; the laws according to which these deductions are drawn, is called analogy; and this is the foundation of all our inferences, from an idea to another, inasmuch as they resemble each other. (56)

In the second sentence of this account, Shelley maintains a Humean definition of causality, as the perception of a mere recurring regularity (conjunction of ideas) upon which

'voluntary intervention' has no influence. In this passage, it is clear that ideas, such as the idea of other minds, are clearly not seen as the mental representations of pre-existing objects, but, in part, as indicative of tendencies which cannot be helped. It is also suggested that this does not constitute a limitation on thought, but is inherent in it. Shelley suggests that ideas involve considerations other than their pure ideational content. The mind does not rule its thoughts in the sense that it could think as it wishes, or according to motives which are transparent to it. The thoughts of the mind constitute a world which reflects the lack of transparency of thoughts, and which, for this very reason, is suceptible of manipulation. That some ideas are compelling is not the opposite of liberty. On the contrary, this indicates that they participate in communal practices at a deeper level than can be dictated. Shelley's last point in this passage, that "the precise limits of our actual ideas are not the actual limits of possible ideas", may be related to the notion that the mind cannot apprehend the scope of its capacities. Shelley turns the sceptical suspension of belief and knowledge into an irrepressible movement ("constrain us to believe") away from the actual, and suggests that it is inherent in the nature of thoughts that they are evocative of other thoughts.

Diversities, Interstices, and Language.

Shelley does not need to resort to the notion of an inner sense, such as "sensibility", in order to account for the existence of

moral or aesthetic agreements. Ideas testify to the context (the "Spirit of the Age") in which they are produced, without this context being constraining in return. Moreover, as the meaningful thoughts held by subjects, they represent an extension from actual to possible ideas. Thought can, therefore, be said to be imaginative. Shelley does not seem to envisage the kind of gap between the mind and experience, or between phenomenon and noumenon, which the German idealists, for their part, felt the need to bridge, often by claiming "the authority of an absolute, the knowledge of an essential or 'noumenal' identity." (57) The connection between the knower and the objects which are known need not be sanctioned by the authority of an absolute. This is made apparent in the following passage from 'Speculations on Metaphysics':

> we see trees, fields, living beings in our shape, and in shapes more or less analogous to our own. These are perpetually changing the mode of their existence relatively to us. To express the varieties of these modes, we say, we move, they move; and as this motion is continual, though uniform, we express our conception of the diversities of its course by - it has been, it is, it shall be. These diversities are events or objects and are essential, considered relatively to human identity, for the existence of the human mind. For if the inequalities, produced by what has been termed the operations of the external universe were levelled by the perception of our being, uniting and filling up their interstices, motion and mensuration, and time and space; the elements of the human mind thus abstracted, sensation and imagination cease. Mind cannot be considered pure. (58)

Change, differences and diversities are not pre-existent in the allegedly outside world. Nor are they merely the projections or the constructions of the mind. The diversities which are perceived cannot be differentiated from the perception of

diversities. As a result, the mind may appear like a Humean flux of perceptions, but, in this passage, this motion is neither a constraint nor a deficiency, but required from the perspective of the mind, or, "relatively to human identity". This "motion" cannot be ascribed to the perceived object any more than to the perceiving mind. The last sentence of the 1840 edition, following a cancelled passage of the manuscript defining metaphysics as "an inquiry concerning those things belonging to, or connected with, the internal nature of mind," reinforces this view:

> It is said that mind produces motion; and it might as well have been said that motion produces mind. (59)

As there is no criterion measuring this motion, it is neither true nor untrue. If this can be called, in the Kantian terminology, the world of conditions, where it is possible to describe the chain of conditions of the subject's necessary way of seeing the world, then, this may also be read as Shelley's statement that such a chain may not necessarily be assimilated with "the curse which binds us to be subjected to the accident of surrounding impressions," as stated in *A Defence of Poetry*. (60). That surrounding impressions may be reified as a constraint and a curse is already the sign of their decline. On the other hand, in the passage quoted from 'The Mind', nothing in the relationship between mind and world is left to be desired or unaccounted for, either in the object, which is all there is to perceive, or in the subject, who does all the perceiving possible.

The absence of an exterior criterion deciding on the inclusion of ideas within, or their exclusion from, the "catalogue of existence is also conveyed in Shelley's consideration of language. The apparently arbitrary and conventional distinctions of tense and persons, which are conveyed within language, are not simply imposed upon what Shelley refers to as the 'motion' of the outside world. Nor is this motion merely the product of the flawed perception of a finite perceiving mind, and a mind to which the underlying unity of the world would not be accessible. In the passage quoted previously, Shelley describes the process by which the mind provides itself with the world in which the mind finds its place ("relatively to us", "relatively to human identity"). The mind and the world are interdependent terms, and to think of a world that is not perceived by the mind would be a contradiction. Thus, the "inequalities" or "diversities" to which Shelley refers do not indicate a fault or a lack. On the contrary, Shelley suggests that they are part and parcel of the laws of thought. The mind produces them, and they are also the material with which the mind has to deal. In this way, the mind may be described as an articulation of itself, where the two strands of the chain result from a single twining movement, and where the passage from one strand to the other cannot be located.

In this passage from the 'Speculations on Metaphysics', it is made clear that language cannot be said to be false because it indicates distinctions where there are none. Language could only be held to be deceptively arbitrary if, on the one hand, a real state of things outside of language could be envisaged, and if,

on the other hand, language was mistaken for things. On the contrary, and as noted by Terence Alan Hoagwood, "Shelley denies signs independent ontological validity" (61):

> The difference is merely nominal between those two classes of thoughts which are vulgarly distinguished by the names of ideas and of external objects. (...) The words, I , you, they, are not signs of any actual difference subsisting between the assemblage of thoughts thus indicated, but are merely marks employed to denote the different modifications of the one mind. (...) The words I, and you, and they are grammatical devices invented simply for arrangement and totally devoid of the intense and exclusive sense usually attached to them. (62)

Words should not be mistaken for things. Conversely, the fact that these differences are nominal does not make them fictitious or deceptive. Hoagwood has pointed out that "where Shelley encloses knowledge within the circumference of ideas (thoughts, perceptions), he also encloses the issue very specifically within the structure of the discourse itself." (63) Language is to be understood in terms of embedded communal conceptions. The use of words is not meant to make any claim as to the actual or "exclusive" existence of that to which the words are supposed to refer. This explains why Shelley denounces Horne Tooke's ambition to demonstrate the dependence of thought on language in his study of etymology:

> The discoveries of Horne Tooke in philology do not, as he has asserted, throw light upon Metaphysics, they only render the instrument requisite to its perception more exact and accurate. (64)

Shelley sees an unbridgeable gap between words, which are "the instruments of mind", but "are not mind" nor "portions of the mind," (65) and "Metaphysics", which is the science of the facts

of the mind. These facts are the relations between thoughts in the mind, which the mere denominations of language cannot change:

> The relations of things remain unchanged by whatever system. By the word things is to be understood any object of thought, that is, any thought upon which any other thought is employed, with an apprehension of distinction. The relations of these remain unchanged; and such is the material of our knowledge. (66)

For Shelley philosophical systems are configurations which have not got the power to alter the relations of things which they describe. It may be inferred from this that the same thought may take different names, possibly as the requirements of the age dictate. There may be no new thoughts, but only new combinations of the same thoughts. In this respect, the progress which Shelley sees the mind as capable of, does not bring in new material into the mind, but to the extent that these are the thoughts of the mind, ie "the material of our knowledge", they are a matter of constant relating within the mind.

According to Hoagwood, "Shelley uses the phrase 'one mind' to designate not the ontological unity into which all human minds are subsumed, but rather the epistemological unity of thoughts in an individual mind." (67) Hugh Roberts discusses this passage from 'On Life', and disputes Hoagwood's sceptical understanding of the 'one mind' for which the latter uses the support of Drummond's *Academical Questions*. (68) In this case, Roberts appears to reverse the ontological assertion of the existence of distinct individual minds, into the ontological refutation of this existence. Shelley does not so much deny the existence of distinct individual minds as indicate that the assemblage of

thoughts does not warrant "the intense and exclusive sense" commonly attached to this idea. One of the facts of the mind or laws of thought to the study of which Shelley calls, (69) is that thought is no respecter of distinct minds. The epistemological circle by which it is to be understood that it is meaningless to oppose the mind to an allegedly outside world (a circle whose circumference is everywhere), so that the mind may be defined as a domain of its own (the one mind), allows us to grasp that the idea of mind means one and the same mind. The unity of the mind is therefore a function of its inability to measure itself against that which lies outside it, rather than the result of transcending our habitual view of the spatial and temporal world, and of grasping the universal in the particular. (70)

This law of the mind also determines the kind of world in which such a mind finds its place, because the ideas which the mind holds manifest a meaningful world for the subject. The following passage from the 'Speculations on Metaphysics' offers a way of considering Nature which is most satisfactorily in accordance with the operations of the human mind described above:

> By considering all knowledge as bounded by perception, whose operations may be indefinitely combined, we arrive at a conception of Nature inexpressibly more magnificent, simple and true, than accords with the ordinary systems of complicated and partial consideration. (71)

"the ordinary systems of complicated and partial consideration" can be understood as the philosophical doctrines which make either the object or the subject as the revolving point of their systems, and take them as things rather than names. This, for

Shelley, already separates that which the mind does not separate in thinking.

The harmony between the world which the mind can conceive of, and the mind which conceives of such a world, has an obvious aesthetic aspect to it, as the term "magnificent" suggests. This may be compared with the harmony of the faculties which Kant sees in the aesthetic relationship. Nothing is missing in knowledge, which is a mode of fittedeness of the mind with itself. A passage of a letter to Peacock, describing Pompei, dated from January 1819, evokes a landscape of the mind, which may be proposed as a model of the mind's creations which the intellectual philosophy could offer:

> This scene was what the Greeks beheld. (...) They lived in harmony with nature, & the interstices of their incomparable columns, were portals as it were to admit the spirit of beauty which animates this glorious universe to visit those whom it inspired. (72)

In this passage, the columns can be taken as the symbol of the Greeks' shaping of the world, and of the Greek mind's operation. The shafts of the columns measure space, and let the space between them measure them. In this way, they evoke a shaping which is not adverse to being discontinuous, in the same way as actual ideas call for possible ideas.

The Mind's Limit.

In 'Speculations on Metaphysics' Shelley offers a notion of the mind which cannot be differentiated from that which the mind knows, or, in Shelley's words, "the material of our knowledge". As has been argued above, this is so because knowledge cannot warrant its own truth: it never points at anything else but more "material of our knowledge." (73) Knowledge can then be seen as the movement of the mind as it endlessly articulates itself. This does not make knowledge relative but, rather, never completely transparent. In this respect, Shelley's views can be compared with Hume's. The meaning of ideas was the basis of Hume's examination of human nature in *A Treatise on Human Nature* (1740), and this was also one of Shelley's concerns. According to Deleuze, Hume's doctrine was primarily a critique of forms of rationalism which put ideas within reason, and for which ideas represented objects. As argued earlier, this may also be seen as Shelley's contention:

> In making representation a criterion, and in putting the idea within reason, rationalism combined within the idea that which cannot be constituted in the first sense of experience, and cannot be given in an idea without contradiction: the generality of the idea itself and the existence of the object, that is, the very content of the words "always universal, necessary or true". Rationalism transferred the determination of the mind to outside objects, thereby cutting philosophy out from the meaning and the understanding both of practice and of the subject. (74)

The interference of "practice and of the subject" within the domain of knowledge does not cast doubt on the purity of knowledge. It is rather the sign that ideas are significant of

a context, which cannot, however, be completely surveyed. Hume's doctrine 'distinguishes' ideas in the sense that they are to be considered independently of a reality that is outside of the mind. On the contrary, mental operations are sensations which have been transformed. No rupture takes place from the one to the other. This absence of differentiation is common to Shelley, and to a materialist thinker like Condillac, whose views are quoted here first:

> If we trace step by step the genesis of the operations of the mind and the process of transformation of sense elements which these operations involve, then we see that there is never any clear line of demarcation between individual phases of mental activity, but that these phases imperceptibly melt into one another. (75)

> A scale might be formed, graduated according to the degrees of a combined ratio of intensity, duration, connexion, periods of recurrence, and utility, which would be the standard, according to which all ideas might be measured and an uninterrupted chain of nicely shadowed distinctions would be observed from the faintest impression on the senses, to the most distinct combinations of knowledge which, including our own nature, constitutes what we call universe. (76)

Despite the similarity between the two passages, the intent of each of them is very different. The absence of a materialistic framework in Shelley forbids him to provide the kind of explanation which is available to Condillac. The materialist Condillac emphasises the lack of distinction between the phases of mental operations in order to reach the conclusion that thought is basically identical with sense impressions. Shelley, on the other hand, cannot step outside the circle of the mind, but is led to consider a "chain of nicely shadowed distinctions". That this chain is "uninterrupted" also means that it allows for

always more distinctions. Observation does not discover pre-existing distinctions, and, therefore, it can never reduce the distinctions which it introduces in the movement of observing them. Each idea can be referred to the ideas to which it is related, but, also each idea is productive of these relations. This passage describes the point where the separation of observation from its purported object becomes a relation from which it cannot disengage itself. Shelley describes an observation which follows so closely its object that it finds itself a function of not merging with it. As empiricism contended, the mind can fully exercise its capacities, such as observation, but, for Shelley, it seems that these capacities can be exercised up to the limit where they cease being under the subject's control.

As was suggested in the brief examination of Shelley's view of language, there can be no objection against, and no consequence from, adopting one set of terms, whether material or moral, as a starting point for an understanding of the world, as long as these are taken for names and not for things. This merely amounts to entering the mind, or universe, from one end, which will lead to the other end. If a starting point is necessary to any systematic (or philosophical) understanding of the world, then, Shelley's view leads to the notion that the system is bound to equal, or be caught up by, that of which it claims to be the system. However the possibility that in coming full circle, the system may become self-explication is not open for Shelley. If the mind is seen as a self-generated universe, whose material

does not precede the knowledge of it, and where distinctions always provide more of that which can be distinguished or thought, then, the mind must be located on the outer limit of the world which enables it to hold the thoughts which it does. This may be the "verge" which is referred to in the following passage from 'On Life' (1819):

> It is difficult to find terms adequately to express so subtle a conception as that to which the intellectual philosophy has conducted us. We are on that verge where words abandon us, and what wonder if we grow dizzy to look down the dark abyss of - how little we know. (77)

The progress of the mind, on which Shelley insisted, is infinite because it cannot be measured by a pre-existing content. The mind can, then, be both the full extent of the universe, and very "little". The universe which is obtained, and produced, by infinite distinctions or fragmentation can also, by virtue of the same principle, dangerously contract into a pure interruption, noted here by an hyphen. The principles behind Shelley's epistemology, according to which there can be no mind without some ideas and the mind cannot be considered pure, make it impossible for the mind to be dissolved. Instead, that which is called the mind remains as the irreducible margin described above. The empiricist roots of Shelley's epistemology close the option of idealism's assertion to him, but, as Shelley consistently appears to revel in the endless possibilities of the world which are the combinations of the mind's self-articulation, he is also aware that, in protecting the mind from self-dissolution, the same possibilities lay the mind open to a more antagonistic aspect:

> No essential distinction between any one of these ideas, or any class of them, is founded on a correct observation of the nature of things, but merely on a consideration of what thoughts are most invariably subservient to the security and happiness of life (78)

This antagonistic aspect is central to the instrospective examination of the mind, which is part of Shelley's science of mind, and to which this analysis will turn in the next Chapter.

Chapter Three

'Speculations on Metaphysics' and *Alastor* (1815)

This Chapter will analyse *Alastor* as a depiction of a psychic journey whose vicissitudes apparently contrast with the trust which Shelley places in his science of mind, (1) and with the project of self-definition which he envisages in 'Difficulty of Analyzing the Human Mind,' except for the central passage of this essay which describes thought in terms which recall the navigation of the figure of the *Alastor* Poet:

> It is like a river whose rapid and perpetual stream flows outwards; _ like one in dread who speeds through the recesses of some haunted pile, and dares not look behind. The caverns of the mind are obscure, and shadowy; or pervaded with a lustre, beautifully bright indeed, but shining not beyond their portals. (2)

This analysis follows the examination of Shelley's views on knowledge, which has shown the role of empiricism in drawing the notions of knowledge and truth away from a representative theory, and toward the notion of structural coherence. As was indicated in the previous Chapter, Shelley refrains from following the path of post-Kantian idealism in aiming at a self-grounding system of knowledge or philosophy, as his view on knowledge is also ruled by the sceptical notion that it is impossible to conceive of nature as a closed system which we could know fully, since we cannot stand outside it. This may be seen at the root of

Shelley's assertion that "we can think of nothing which we have not perceived". The subject can never take a full view of the way in which he or she perceives. The mind is not disengaged from the way in which distinctions are made. This is the direction of Shelley's thoughts, as expressed in the following passage from 'Speculations on Metaphysics':

> By considering all knowledge as bounded by perception, whose operations may be indefinitely combined, we arrive at a conception of Nature inexpressibly more magnificent, simple and true, than accord[s with] the ordinary systems of complicated and partial consideration. Nor does a contemplation of the Universe, in this comprehensive and synthetical view, exclude the subtlest analysis of its modifications and parts. (3)

The "synthetical view" refers to the fact that all distinctions, such as the distinction between the material and the moral universe, remain within the circle of the mind. It also refers to the mind's inability to encounter anything, the provenance of which the mind could knowingly differentiate from itself. This aspect of Shelley's notion of knowledge is comparable to the position to which the Jena romantics were led as a result of the lack of a final ground on which to base the system of knowledge. As Andrew Bowie, has argued, the lack of a standpoint from which to assess the relativity of our knowledge makes this relativity undemonstrable. (4)

According to this notion of knowledge which is common, then, to Shelley and the Jena romantics, the world is known in this way because it is also meaningful in this way, that is to say, more than the mere correlative of our own current concepts. It may

then be argued that Shelley's use of the term "synthetic" in his "comprehensive and synthetic view" propounds a view that is similar to that of Friedrich Schlegel in the following statement from his *Notebooks on Philosophy*: "Massive mistake, that only one definition is possible of every concept. Rather infinitely many, real synthetic [definitions]." (5) Shelley's "view" and Schlegel's "definitions" are synthetic in the sense that they simultaneously indicate that there is no grounding absolute proposition, and no view of things that would be wrong for failing to comply with such a proposition. Just as for Schlegel, there really is no error since "only if one had a founding absolute proposition could any subsequent truth not be seen as merely the refutation of a preceding truth," (6) similarly, for Shelley, "Our whole life is thus an education of error." (7)

However, the fact that the Absolute can only be known negatively, does not mean that one "gives way to an indeterminate longing for the impossible." (8) In a similar movement, Shelley asserts that his "comprehensive and synthetical view" does not "exclude the subtlest analysis of its modifications and parts." (9) Although analysis appears to fly in the face of "what is most fundamental about ourselves [and] seems inaccessible to representation," (10) Shelley indicates that his intellectual philosophy is not a matter of availing oneself of another, truer capacity of the mind, which simply illuminates what reflective thought does not, as if it had access to "a strange region situated beyond the world". (11) To believe that aesthetic consciousness (12) has access to such a counter-world is to repeat the belief that one

can "proceed from the world to art." (13) This is why, in this analysis of 'Difficulty of Analyzing the Human Mind', it will be possible to connect Shelley's view on the work of self-identity to the side of Blanchot's theory of writing whereby it is markedly dissociated from any notion of direct self-expression. For the Jena romantics, the failure of the I to "grasp itself as the highest principle" (14) in reflective thought leads to Schlegel's view that "every person is only a piece of themselves," (15) i.e., a fragment that is still understood in relation to a whole. Novalis's solution to this failure is contained in his statement: "If the character of a given problem is its insolubility, then we solve the problem by representing its insolubility." (16) However, this does not seem to be the resolution intended by Shelley's presentation of a mind whose activity is resistant to reflective thought. Shelley must see some virtue in probing into the aporias of reflective thought other than reaching the negative truth that the self-positing I testifies to the fact that every person is only a piece of themselves.

The Difficulty of Thought

The previous remarks concerning Shelley's view of knowledge and the similarities which have been noted with the Jena Romantics' understanding of the notion of truth, lead to the need to consider Shelley's strategy, i.e., his way of understanding the assertions that are made within an essentially ambiguous view on

truth claims, as is suggested by the use of the conditional framing the essay. Shelley feigns the stance of the sceptical reader, who casts doubt upon the veracity and accuracy of the "history" that could be put to him: "If it were possible that a person should give a faithful history of his being, from the earliest epochs of his recollection... But thought can with difficulty visit the intricate chambers which it inhabits." In this way, Shelley indicates that the basis on which the story or history is accepted and possible as a history, namely, the fact that it has cut itself off from being, is also the reason for which it can be put into doubt. Shelley questions a project which would proceed from an intentional decision, and rely on the assumption of a principle of self-coincidence within man, whereby "a person" could "give a faithful history of his being":

> If it were possible that a person should give a faithful history of his being, from the earliest epochs of his recollection, a picture would be presented such as the world has never contemplated before. A mirror would be held up to all men in which they might behold their own recollections, and in dim perspective, their shadowy hopes and fears,_ all that they dare not, or that daring and desiring, they could not expose to the open eyes of day... If it were possible to be where we have been, vitally and indeed _ if, at the moment of our presence there, we could define the results of our experience,_ if the passage from sensation to reflection_ from a state of passive perception to voluntary contemplation, were not so dizzying and so tumultuous, this attempt would be less difficult. (17)

The arguments which go against giving one's assent to such a history involve the notion of a subject that is present to itself and self-supportive. These are the aspects which have been theorized as enabling conscious reflective thought, and which lie at the basis of reflective philosophies from Descartes to Kant.

(18) The observation or self-reverting act to which Shelley alludes here involves a subject who, in Rodolphe Gasche's words, is "lifted out of its immediate entanglement in the world," (19) and free from all unmediated relation to being. This attack on mediation also hits the notion of an immediate relation to oneself. The aim of reflective philosophies is to have us accept that we have the "being" in the history. This is the conflation to which Shelley refers dubiously, where the "recollection" of his "earliest epochs" are to be taken as his recollection "from his earliest epochs."

The grounds on which the "autobiographical pact" (20) may, then, be rejected, leading to the suspension of the belief that we may "be where we have been", prove to be the same as the grounds on which a commonsense grasp of reality, where we forget the implied distance from which evidences appear to us, and where reflection acts simply as the mind's eye, is accepted. It is a stance which involves a separation between observer and object, and which does not interfere but is enabling. (21) This is the point where the work of representation and conceptualization is completely successful, since it does not engage the attention, but, on the contrary, disappears into the evidence which it has fashioned. Shelley's critique also implies that the premises of the conception based on the correspondence between history and being beg the question which the project is meant to fulfil, since it is the correspondence between meanings which have previously been attributed to both history and being. Such prior meanings would, then, require an absolute language, of the kind which Hugh

Roberts describes as follows: a "language that names the world absolutely, in all its details, ...[a language] in which an absolute self-consciousness of the world might express itself," so that "the world and our language describing the world become one and the same thing." (22) Roberts's description takes place in his discussion of the tensions which presented themselves to Shelley in the writing of *The Revolt of Islam*, and, in particular, the attempt to break from tradition without replicating it, which is arguably at the root of resorting to reflection. This project of self-definition also runs against the same type of contradiction as does the understanding of the work of art as access to the transcendental level where its unity is revealed and can be surveyed. The correspondence on which such an understanding of the project relies implies that, unless a person has found a point from which his being can make up a history, such a history cannot be given. Yet, in order to find this point, this person has to go through a process which should be justified as leading to this point. It is such a point which Blanchot defines in relation to the moment of death as the moment of life's closure:

> that right moment which alone will balance our life by placing opposite it on the scales a sovereignly balanced death can be grasped only as the unknowable secret: only as that which could never be elucidated unless, already dead, we could look at ourselves from a point from which it would be granted us to embrace as a whole both our life and our death. (23)

To probe into the assumptions which allow us to give our assent to a history is to probe into the assumptions which allow us to accept reality without further questions. Reflective thought is

of interest because it is able to behave as if it were finished, and because the project of portraying oneself implies that the portrait must already be there, but that thought must be blind or oblivious to it in order to give it. Reflective thought forces the subject to see differently and to cease seeing what is more readily visible. This is the interruption of ordinary understanding, which Shelley next describes:

> But thought can with difficulty visit the intricate and winding chambers which it inhabits. It is like a river whose rapid and perpetual stream flows outwards; _ like one in dread who speeds through the recesses of some haunted pile, and dares not look behind. The caverns of the mind are obscure, and shadowy; or pervaded with a lustre, beautifully bright indeed, but shining not beyond their portals.

This passage may then be taken as the depiction of the chastising chaos which reflective thought unleashes in failing to see the portrait which the being already makes up, and in neglecting "what is most fundamental about ourselves". It is reflection which, in its concern to set limits, introduces death into being. But it is also the description of thought's failure from the point of view of linear, logical thought. In this passage, the anticipation of consciousness upon itself is conveyed by the fact that its actions ("visit", "speeds") precede what consciousness might consist in, i.e. "chambers", "recesses". Reflexive thought, whereby an individual is a fragment of themselves, does not merely discover "the separation which from the start distances us from ourselves by separating us from all power of identity," (24), but produces it, just as the romantic fragment produces the absence of the Work. The double movement of pursuit and escape which makes either fusion or immersion impossible, is, in

Blanchot's words "the approach of what allows us to depart," (25) which is another definition of worklessness. Thought discovers that it is able to experience something which it did not expect to be able to experience. This is not only the point where the subject's capacities and consciousness cannot be exercised, but also the point where they experience this incapacity. In describing a certain failure of reflective thought, Shelley has also described where thought cannot go, an experience of "the impossible", which, for Blanchot "escapes our very power to experience it, but whose experience we cannot escape." (26)

Reflexive thought is, then, not merely governed by the need to impose order upon a chaos unleashed by its failure to see that the portrait is already there. Reflexive thought also discovers that it is able to sustain the tumult of the "rapid and perpetual stream", and that it is susceptible to chaos. In this adequacy of reflexive thought and chaos to each other, chaos becomes an order of its own, since thought can experience it. In this way, and despite the pretence of objections outlined previously, it is verified that "thought <u>can</u> with difficulty" visit its chambers. To attack the work of consciousness for being a work and not presence in its purity and originality, or to blame the history for being unfaithful and not vitality itself, is to blame them for claims which they are never able to make, hence Shelley's use of the conditional mode throughout the essay, except for the central description, which was quoted at the beginning of this analysis, and is reminiscent of *Alastor*. (27)

The virtue which Shelley may, then, see in engaging in analysis and reflexive thought is the liberating aspect involved in observing that "we are never the unreflective subject that we seek to be." (28) Reflection is the way of no longer undergoing things as they are. (29) On the other hand, Shelley points at the danger of devastating reflection, which is the absence of orientation described in the middle part of the essay. Reflection is also devastating when it becomes this passage which nothing which it reflects can arrest, because it can neither assimilate chaos to order, i.e., reflect completely, nor be overtaken by chaos. To rely on reflection does not even amount to seeing "things the wrong way round" on the evidence of the I being "subsequent to its basis", (30) because the experience which Shelley describes is the loss of any basis within reflexive thought, rather than the discovery of an order that is contrary to the order imposed by reflexive thought. Between the wish to witness the real beginning of thought, and the realization that, in Novalis's words, "Every real beginning is a secondary movement," (31) thought persists, unacknowledged. There is therefore no blindness, no interval within reflective thought, in the same sense as Schlegel could claim that there is no fragmentary genre, but, rather, the detour allowing the search or quest, which is central to Blanchot's understanding of the work of literature:

> If man did not in some sense already belong to this detour that he most often employs to turn himself away from it, how could he set out along this path that soon disappears _ having in view that attainment of what escapes both aim and sight, advancing as though backward toward a point he only knows he will not reach in person. (32)

It is, then, possible to understand the direction of Shelley's science of mind. Shelley relies on attention as the crux of this science, as both its requirement and the means to fulfil it:

> The science of mind possesses eminent advantages over every other with regard to the certainty of the conclusions which it affords. It requires indeed for its entire development no more than minute and accurate attention to facts. Every student may refer to the testimonials which he bears within himself to ascertain the authorities upon which any assertion rests. It requires no more than attention to perceive perfect sincerity in the relation of what is perceived... We are ourselves then depositories of the evidence of the subject which we consider. (33)

However, he could not rely on attention in this way, if, despite the danger involved, he were not tempted by the "equality" of attention to itself, as Blanchot describes it: "mystery is the center of attention when attention, being equal and perfectly equal to itself, is the absence of any center: thus beyond all regularity, all evenness." (34) The implication of Shelley's essay is not that, in the terms of Clark's helpful formulation, the "act of self-positing is inconceivable without a constitutive relation to an alterity whose necessity must challenge the egocentricity" of reflexive thought (i.e., the model of Fichte's thought, and of reflexive philosophies in general) (35) but, rather, that egocentricity becomes a function of the relation to this alterity.

Alastor

Alastor (1815) has been understood within the coherent perspective of the 1816 eponymous volume, in which Shelley is seen as playing a comparatively visionary perspective supporting his public concerns, against a more pessimistic view of man's limitations and transience (36). Alongside this understanding concerning Shelley's alleged polarized impulses, (37) the collection has also been seen as entertaining more sceptical views on the possibility of reaching objective knowledge about the world. The epistemological concerns about the limitations which are placed on knowledge, and which lead to the troubling realization that the search for knowledge forces the mind back upon itself, are common to both *Speculations on Metaphysics* and *Alastor*. (38)

This may be a useful perspective from which to reconsider a number of interpretations of *Alastor* which, irrespective of their emphasis on the distancing effect of the Preface, take their cue from it, and see the poem as a critique of the exclusive reliance on the mind's creations and of the tendency to abandon human responsibility.(39) The core of these interpretations is the fact that the Poet's desire to possess his ideal maiden leads him to undervalue life as he pursues her into death. This type of interpretation may be broadly defined as setting aspiration, or creative imagination, against reality or "nature".(40) Although these interpretations see the Poet's aspiration as the product of both delusion and disillusion, reflecting the Poet's pursuit

as both a quest and an escape, they tend to introduce a causal relation between these two aspects, which the poem does not corroborate. However, they also thereby draw attention to a number of paradoxes which are central to the poem.

First, the Poet's alleged disappointment is seen to result in scepticism about a phenomenal world which cannot provide certain knowledge about the ultimate truths demanded by the mind. Yet, and as examined previously, Shelley's scepticism differs fundamentally from this type of reactive scepticism which relies on a notion of the world that pre-exists the mind. Second, this line of interpretation takes the view that the Poet's rejection of the world stems from his disappointment at not finding the object of his vision. Yet, in this case, the Poet cannot persist in being disappointed without persevering in his quest. The fact that dissatisfaction does not even represent a deterrent for the Poet can then only be seen as a confirmation of his folly. In whichever way the Poet's divorce from the world is tackled, whether the world is the object of rejection, or a refuge against its limitations, the Poet can only be presented as inevitably making matters worse, and as being the victim of an inexplicable mistake, which was contained in the very principle of the quest.

However, while the Poet's mistake is denounced, his intent deserves some esteem. The poem appears to denounce a mistake which is derived from the Poet's mind, in a volume which, as Fraistat notes, upholds the power of poetry to defy change, since the best products of man's mind are not mortal.(41) Even as it

seals the Poet's fate in a contradiction, this line of interpretation indicates that disappointment is not only to be considered as ensuing from the quest, but as intrinsic to it. In fact, the Poet will be proved wrong if it is verified that the veiled woman of his dreams is only a narcissistic projection: that is to say, merely representative of his aspiration. However, at no point in the poem is the Poet's vision confuted, and the outcome of the quest provides no evidence against the reality of his imaginary vision. The quest cannot test the validity of the vision, since, on the contrary, it is the dream which supposedly triggers his pursuit. In other words, the Poet's not finding the object of his vision is no argument against searching for it, in fact quite to the contrary.

The purpose of the present analysis will be, in the first instance, to examine the kind of delusion of which the Poet is said to be the victim, since the poem does not confute it. If the Poet acts under the influence of a vision which can have no existence on earth, then it may be suggested that the quest is the process which verifies this fact rather than remedies it. This analysis will, then, consider the quest as the process which cannot provide the vision, and which persists in the lack of its object. By virtue of the fact that it must take place as an intervening quest, this is a pursuit which avoids reaching the dreamed object in the process of pursuing it. Just as in the case of reflexive thought progressing towards the moment of its inception, it may be argued that, from the moment the Poet embarks on a such a quest, he also engages in a process which,

seeking the response that will put an end to it, also seeks to be undone. This also implies a reconsideration of the claim that, through the figure of the poet, Shelley is criticizing an excessive form of solitude. In this case, it appears that, in the same way as reflexive thought does in relation to reflection, the Poet's quest both provides and resists articulation. It will, then, be necessary to examine the role of the Narrator in this connection.

1. Departure

The dream set out between lines 151 and 191 of *Alastor* can hardly be seen as the rupture inaugurating the poet's wandering quest. The dream and the quest are linked neither causally nor chronologically, because the first mention of the poet's departure takes place earlier in the poem:

> When early youth had passed, he left
> His cold fireside and alienated home
> To seek strange truths in undiscovered lands.
> (ll. 75-77)

Neil Fraistat has underlined the mirror effect between the two phases of the Visionary's career, ie, between his active search for knowledge, which takes place between lines 78 and 128, and his flight deathward. (42) The poem, then, seems to call for a connection to be made between the impulse to actively look for knowledge, and the departure on a quest which depletes the world of meaning. For example, some of the terms used to describe the former could also apply to the latter ("Has lured his fearless

steps", l. 79, "making the wild his home", l. 99). The search for knowledge which the Poet undertakes cannot, in its turn, be said to be motivated by a lack of knowledge:

> By solemn vision, and bright silver dream,
> His infancy was nurtured. Every sight
> And sound from the vast earth and ambient air,
> Sent to his heart its choicest impulses.
> The fountains of divine philosophy
> Fled not his thirsting lips, and all of great,
> Or good, or lovely, which the sacred past
> In truth or fable consecrates, he felt,
> And knew.
> (ll. 67-75).

On the contrary, this passage describes the satisfaction of someone who lacks nothing, who wishes for nothing, and who, because of this, can be the recipient of everything. This is so much so that, satisfaction, in which possible or future frustration can be evoked only negatively ("The fountains of divine philosophy / Fled not...."), seems to anticipate any need on the Poet's part ("...his thirsting lips", ll. 70-1). If the state of harmony, from which there is no reason for the poet to depart, cannot justify an understanding of the search for knowledge as a response to a lack, conversely, the search for knowledge may be seen as another manifestation of the unselfconscious harmony with the world described in the passage quoted above. On this basis, the quest deathward might also be seen as a form of adequacy to the world in which it takes place, ie, a world that has become an image, rather than a divorce from a world in which the vision of his dream cannot be found.

In the opening section of the poem, the Narrator describes the Poet's admirable career, and his sensitivity to a meaning to which he, albeit unwittingly, makes his audience sensitive:

> He lived, he died, he sung, in solitude.
> Strangers have wept to hear his passionate notes,
> And virgins, as unknown he passed, have pined
> And wasted for fond love of his wild eyes.
> (ll. 60-63)

At this stage, solitude, far from being objectionable, commands admiration for the stereotypical figure of the Poet, who is depicted as a wondrous being. The conventionality of the figure of the Poet arguably verges on parody here, owing to the reactions which it provokes, and which, compared to the Poet's own unresponsiveness, appear over-impassioned. From the outset, the Narrator's account of the Poet's dealings with his fellow human beings is marked by a discrepancy between the reactions which he provokes, and his unresponsiveness. Yet, the Poet does not reject his audience's reactions any more than he does the world around him. He is simply the unwitting recipient of addresses which escape him ("as unknown he passed") as they are not meant for him. He can only refract them, even as they contribute to turn him into a seductive mystery. It could be inferred that the Poet's audience falls victim to the same mistake as that which some commentators have ascribed to the Poet himself, namely, that of fixating an enigma upon a figure who merely conveys it. Yet the audience is not deceived in perceiving the existence of mystery, since the Poet cannot undeceive them. It must therefore be acknowledged that if there is to be some mystery in the Poet, this comes mainly from the fact that he

cannot speak for himself about it. It is possible to argue that the Poet's audience is no more deluded by the Poet's indifference which turns into a seductive mystery, than the Poet is mistaken about a vision against which the world provides no evidence.

The kind of communication which is effected between the Poet and his audience, is also repeated in the episode of the dream. The dream which is supposed to precipitate the Poet's ruin cannot be said to take place within a context of dissatisfaction. As a result, it becomes difficult to see the quest as an attempt to look for, or possibly compensate for, what has been lost. It is possible to advance Judith Chernaik's statement that the poet "looks for he knows not what" (43) one step further, and to suggest that the poet might be engaged in a quest which is not only aimed at finding something. The purposefulness of the Poet's quest also appears undermined by the fact that, as the previous analysis has suggested, events are liable to a retrospective reading, where the quest following the event of the dream sheds a new light on the preceding search for knowledge.

2. The dream.

The poet can be seen as excluded from the world because of his chimerical dream. It has been argued that the poet does not see the Arab maiden because she is overshadowed by the ideal of his dream.(44) This claim obviously disrupts the presentation of events, and this disruption may even be ascribed to the pervasive revision to which the occurrence of the dream seems to subject

events. The dream is precisely an occurrence which takes place outside of reality. However, the poem suggests a coincidence between the dream and reality, even if the antithetical nature of the two makes it impossible for this coincidence to be observed, except by the Narrator who is, alone, able to relate it. If the Arab maiden watches over the poet's sleep, the poet also, in some sense, watches over the maid. The two following passages seem to bring the poet and the maid together, through a kind of communication which is not based on reciprocity or actual exchange:

> Meanwhile an Arab maiden brought his food
> ...
> Enamoured, yet not daring for deep awe
> To speak her love: _ and watched his nightly sleep,
> Sleepless herself, to gaze upon his lips
> Parted in slumber
> (ll. 130; 133-7)

> He dreamed a veiled maid
> Sate near him, talking in low solemn tones.
> Her voice was like the voice of his own soul
> Heard in the calm of thought;
> (ll. 151-4)

The dream allows a particular circularity to take place between the poet and the maid. Not only are the dream maiden's "tones" like "the voice of [the poet's] soul", but they seem to be the message coming from the sleeping poet's "lips / Parted in slumber," a message which the Arab maiden herself dare not speak. The irony of the dream lies in the fact that it effects a connection which cannot be effective outside the dream. Thanks to the dream, the maid need not speak to be understood and the Poet need not listen to hear that which cannot be uttered. The Poet is able to hear his own voice in such a way as the state of

conscious self-coincidence cannot permit. It follows that the relationality of the maid to the Poet can be stressed only if the maid is also seen as allowing the Poet a relation to himself which self-coincidence obliterates.

The dream ends in exhaustion. The intensity permeating the dream goes beyond anything that can be sustained or suffered, and is eventually reduced into insensibility and senselessness, as the double meaning of "dissolving" suggests:

> she drew back a while,
> Then, yielding to the irresistible joy,
> With frantic gesture and short breathless cry
> Folded his frame in her dissolving arms.
> (ll. 184-7)

The effect of active disappearance, which the term "dissolving" conveys, translates the maid's power of being

> Soon the solemn mood
> Of her pure mind kindled through all her frame
> A permeating power: wild numbers then
> She raised...
> (ll. 161-4)

In these passages, the maid appears as a presence which simultaneously comes closer and draws back. The maid's veil or dissimulation, symbolising her restraint, materialises into a body:

> At the sound he turned,
> And saw by the warm light of their own life
> Her glowing limbs beneath the sinuous veil
> Of woven wind, her outspread arms now bare
> (ll. 174-7)

This activity within being can be equated with Blanchot's notion of "l'immédiat" (the immediate), which he also calls "the reality

of sensible presence." (45) The immediate escapes appropriation: "the too-present to which access is denied because it is always closer than any approach, reversing itself to become absence." (46) The ethereal aspect of the maid stems, therefore, from a physicality which prevents her from being fixed and turned into an object which can be grasped. In its ability to become a phenomenon, the dream maiden is also an instance of Blanchot's notion of "image", where the distance which habitually allows us to see a thing is, here, "in the heart of the thing", so that , "having become image, instantly it has become that which no one can grasp, the unreal, the impassive". (47) The claim that the maid's inability to take on a physical reality betrays her mere relationality to the Poet can be reversed into the claim that, on the contrary, her sensuousness forbids her from being merely comprehended as a being. (48) The impossibility of grasping the maid is due to her lack of definition, and to the extent to which she involves the poet. This explains why the poet cannot but hope to reach the object of his dream. (49)

The rapport between the poet and the dream maiden involves no fusion, but, on the contrary, a meeting of non-coincidence. As Tim Clark has suggested, the difficulty which the poet is facing cannot be understood in terms of an inadequacy between the imaginative mind and exterior reality. In his analysis of 'Alastor', Clark states that it is "not so much that the mind's inner resources have failed so that nature... itself appears barren," nor is it "an issue of the mind tempering itself to an intransigent reality that cannot answer the poet's want." (50)

The dream maiden is a reality which cannot be segmented or shaped, and which reveals the fulfilment of the Poet's desire in its deferment. The solipsistic consequences of the poet's dream, and the fact that the poet does not seem able to go beyond himself in order to meet others, can only be recognized if it is also agreed that the apparent self-centeredness of the poet implies a radical dispossession.

The quest will, therefore, have to be seen as a process that is sufficient unto itself, and whose essence lies in not finding that which it seeks, or, which amounts to the same, in being fulfilled as a searching process. The passion which animates the poet's quest is also analogous to the underlying stream of mental activity _ the difficulty of thought _ which animates the analysing enterprise in 'Difficulty of Analyzing the Mind'. The Poet has not steered away from the search for knowledge which took him to the birth of time, but the knowledge which is now gained can no longer be differentiated from that of which it is the knowledge.

3. Reflections.

The Poet is not so much awakened by the extinction of the dream as by the spasm, in between dreamlike vision and wakefulness, which this extinction creates. The Poet is awakened by the uncontrollable energy of imageless sleep, which had been eclipsed by the dream, and whose metaphorical description as "a dark

flood" heralds one of the motifs of the landscape which the Poet will sail over:

> sleep,
> like a dark flood suspended in its course,
> Rolled back its impulse on his vacant brain.
>
> Roused by the shock he started from his trance
> (ll. 189-92)

Whilst, in the dream, the Poet experiences sensuousness to the point of senselessness, hence its extinction, conversely, in this passage, he experiences the oblivion of sleep as an active state. If the obliteration of consciousness can be experienced in this way, then wakefulness may be held as a symmetrical kind of obliteration. It is precisely because wakefulness and sleep interrupt and mirror each other that neither can be used as a criterion against the other. This is also the case for illusion and reality, which the Narrator would like to be able to pit against each other, as will now be examined.

At the outset of the quest (ll. 211-9), the Narrator encapsulates the Poet's undertaking within a number of propositions between which there is precisely nothing to choose, as they mirror one another, and cannot provide the criterion which would decide between them. If "the dark gate of death / Conduct(s) to [Sleep's] mysterious paradise" (l. 211-3) describes the Poet's desire to be delivered from the mirage of life in order to be reunited with his vision, then, this version tallies with the view that, even the ephemeral phenomena of nature, in their suggestive duplicity, such as "the bright arch of rainbow clouds / and pendent mountains seen in the calm of lake," (l. 213-4)

will drive him along the path beyond the merely natural. In fact, natural phenomena can no longer be called merely natural, but are already the accomplishment of suggestiveness to which the Poet responds. The Poet who experiences his vision as a reality will not, then, be made to encounter the alleged reality of the "black and watery depth" (l.215), which the beautiful reflections of nature may hide, since it is itself part of the illusion which would make life a mirage. In the Poet's quest, there is no "black and watery" reality which can refute his undertaking and undeceive the Poet from his supposed illusion. It follows that the "day" is "detested" (l. 218) if it repels the "shade which the foul grave exhales", an ugliness which, in Rajan's terms, "ceases to be a reality as soon as we move beyond the material world". (51) Referring to the same passage, Wasserman underlines the "paradox of the contradictory faces of the same object, the equivocal image that, like the blue vault that is either sky or tomb, yields opposing meanings depending on the perspective in which it is viewed." (52) Wasserman sees this paradox as conveying the lack of ground for affirming either that human life, or the vision of transcendence, is an illusion. According to my analysis, however, the contradictory faces of the same object are not an alternative between which a choice is open, but each belongs to a logic which does not allow one to catch sight of the other.

The Poet holds the tormenting death in life into which his search seems to turn life as the confirmation of his pursuit rather than its refutation. As a result, the irony whereby he is made to

encounter the inert vacancy of nature which his quest seeks to avoid, is undone. On the contrary, it might be precisely at the point where the Poet is reduced to the status of a mere reflection of a natural object that, nature being no longer merely natural, his vision reaches its accomplishment:

> His wan eyes
> Gaze on the empty scene as vacantly
> As Ocean's moon looks on the moon in heaven
> (11. 200-2)

In the next section of this analysis, I intend to examine the ways in which the Poet's quest is ironically misconstrued by the Narrator's outside perspective. If the Poet gives the impression of looking for something beyond nature, this is in fact because nature itself has taken on the speculative aspects of the Poet's quest. Nature is not merely the locale of the quest, but corresponds to the full scope of it, as the world which the quest opens up. The Poet moves vainly within the space of the quest, and is "wandering", in the sense which Blanchot gives to the term, under the influence of the error which nature as an image has become: "Error means wandering, the inability to abide and stay. For where the wanderer is, the conditions of a definitive here are lacking". (53) Therefore, the apparent dissatisfaction of the Poet which the Narrator observes, is the persistence of his searching process to its origin. In the process of the narrative, the Narrator will be the recipient of a reality which may be awesome only to him, as, for the Poet, it is the imaginary experienced as the depth of vision.

4. Poet and Narrator

The irony within the following passage consists in the fact that the same terms with which the Narrator may be understood as denouncing the fallacy of the vision by contrasting it with the existing outside world (in the narrator's view, there is no Spirit but visible nature) might precisely be those which apply to the Poet's vision of nature as imbued with a Spirit:

> A Spirit seemed
> To stand beside him _ clothed in no bright robes
> Of shadowy silver or enshrining light,
> Borrowed from aught the visible world affords
> Of grace, or majesty, or mystery;_
> But, undulating woods, and silent well,
> And leaping rivulet, and evening gloom
> Now deepening the dark shades, for speech assuming,
> Held commune with him, as if he and it
> Were all that was
> (ll. 479-88)

Consequently, neither for the Narrator, nor for the Poet, can it be disputed that "he and it/ Were all that was". In other words, the same Spirit which, the Narrator believes, drives the Poet away from nature may in fact be, for the Poet, nature itself. This is suggested by the motif of the "star" within this passage of the poem. The reference to "some inconstant star ... twinkling fair" (ll. 463-4) contrasts with the Poet's own "wan light," (l. 470) and serves to stress the isolation of the Poet from the surrounding world, whose encompassing reflection shimmers on the surface of a well (ll. 457-68). On the other hand, the later duplication of the single "inconstant star" into eyes, leads to the suggestion that, what the Narrator takes as inconstancy,

becomes, for the Poet, the very basis of a meaningfulness which beckons him on his quest:

> only... when his regard
> Was raised by intense pensiveness, ...two eyes,
> Two starry eyes, hung in the gloom of thought,
> And seemed with their serene and azure smiles
> To beckon him.
> (11. 488- 92)

As a result, the potentially infinite reflection of the surrounding world, including the "star twinkling fair", from which the Poet seemed separated, takes on an entirely different significance. This may now be seen as the landscape which the Poet actually contemplates since

> Hither the Poet came. His eyes beheld
> Their own wan light through the reflected lines
> Of his thin hair, distinct in the dark depth
> Of that still fountain
> (11. 469-72)

In this case, the qualification of the Poet's light as "wan" would only be due to the Narrator's inability to see through the Poet's eyes. This passage has been construed as a typically narcissistic stance, characterizing an "archaic solipsism, unable to accept alienation in the field of the self." (54) However, it is clear that, if the Poet's solipsism is an enclosure upon the self, this self is not a point to revert back to, and nothing which he possesses. The Poet is so far from possessing his self, that he cannot recognize it when he looks at it, an aspect of the myth of Narcissus which Blanchot underlines, and which he connects to his notion of the image in *L'Ecriture du désastre*: "But the aspect of the myth which Ovid eventually forgets, is that Narcissus, bending over the spring, does not recognize

himself in the fluid image that the water sends back to him. It is thus not himself, not his perhaps non-existent 'I' that he loves or, even in his mystification - desires." (55) Alienation is then nothing to "accept," when there is no self-possessed interiority to be alienated. The narrator is then confronted with the mystery which the Poet's vision constitutes for him, and this mystery replicates the Poet's objectless quest.

In the gesture of opposing the Poet to visible nature, and of describing the Poet's own mind as a fallacious alternative world, the Narrator cannot, however, prevent the Poet's world from being taken for the only world that is visible. The Narrator would then unwittingly confirm that the Poet is not looking for something other than nature, but that nature has become something that beckons him. The essence of the Poet's quest is verified every time the Narrator stresses the separation of the Poet's visionary creations from the world (ll. 296-8; 304), or nature's impassive unresponsiveness to the quest's turmoil (ll. 386, 393, 576-7). For the Poet, there is no vacancy in nature which is not already the animation to which his impassioned quest is the testimony.

5. Wandering and the desert.

Just as thought, in its attempted analysis, is both chasing and chased, because its reflecting process depends on falling short of reflecting entirely, similarly, the poet's journey is

presented, in the narrator's terms, as both a search, and an escape:

> He eagerly pursues
> Beyond the realms of dream that fleeting shade;
> He overleaps the bounds.
> (ll. 205-7)

> The little boat
> Still fled before the storm; still fled, like foam
> Down the steep cataract of a wintry river
> (ll. 344-6)

The poet is "pursuing" to the very same extent as he is "fleeing". For this reason, the desert or "wilderness", in which his erratic movement takes place, can be seen neither simply as the denial of reality on the part of the deceived poet, nor as the symbol of the loss of touch with reality from which the poet would suffer. The desert is the only space for the poet's paradoxical quest to take place. It is the open space that is prerequisite to it, and the verification that the vision is absent from the world. It is the vast space which the poet's journey covers, and, simultaneously, devastates, and lays bare, pushing the quest ever further onwards. The poet does not simply go nowhere, but nowhere has taken on a spatial reality, the reality of the desert, where the Poet truly "mak[es] the wild his home" (l. 99). The quest devastates the space in which it must be pursued, in the same way as thought is pushed to the point where it cannot think anymore. It can, therefore, be argued that the Poet is lured further and further into his own mind, if it is also understood that "his own mind" has filled the dimension of the world of the quest.

Logically, the poet is never submerged in the illusion to which he has apparently fallen prey:

> Seized by the sway of the ascending stream,
> With dizzy swiftness, round, and round, and round,
> ridge after ridge the straining boat arose,
> Till on the verge of the extremest curve,
> Where, through an opening of the rocky bank,
> The waters overflow, and a smooth spot
> Of glassy quiet mid those battling tides,
> Is left, the boat paused shuddering. _ Shall it sink
> Down the abyss ? Shall the reverting stress
> Of that resistless gulf embosom it ?
> Now shall it fall ?
> (ll. 387-97)

The poet's progress towards this extremity can only be indefinite, as the emphasis on circularity in the above passage makes clear. In this centrifugal movement, the pressure which keeps the boat on the periphery of the whirlpool also keeps it necessarily within it. Therefore, far from "overleap[ing] the bounds" (l. 207), the poet strictly follows a limit which cannot be crossed, because it recedes as the poet comes closer to it. It is clear that the Poet's quest is of no avail, and that his voyage could be considered as the equivalent of stasis. It is also at this point that the role of the Narrator needs to be examined further, since his tale needs the Poet's undertaking to lend itself to a narration, which inertia jeopardizes. A parallel can be established between the Narrator's need to sustain his tale, and the Poet's need to sustain his quest. As Rajan argues, the paradox of the Poet's voyage stems equally from the difficulty inherent in the quest, and from its articulation into a narrative. (56) It is, therefore, necessary to examine the ways in which the Poet's and the Narrator's fates are interdependent.

If the Poet is seen as undervaluing life, i.e., as being blind and deaf to the elements, (l. 289) and set apart from the brotherhood which the Narrator upholds, then the Poet is merely unresponsive to a liveliness which stems from the Narrator's perspective. The Narrator's point of view creates the Poet's isolation, and supplies the "world of unconscious relatedness which is alien to the self-conscious striving of man". (57) In this case, nature's unconsciousness corresponds to the Poet's blindness to it. The Narrator ironically supplies an analogue of the Poet's isolation, and literally provides the landscape of the Poet's devastating quest. In this light, the Narrator's descriptions simultaneously repel and invite the ravaging power of the Poet's quest. However, they also fail to do so, as it can be argued that the Poet's process puts the Narrator's own narrative process under strain.

The narrative seems to be pushed to the limits of description as it tackles the turmoil which the Poet encounters in his voyage, and as the violence of the storm is intensified by the Poet's boat hugging the wind:

> A whirlwind swept it on,
> With fierce gusts and precipitating force,
> Through the white ridges of the chafed sea.
> (ll. 320-3)
>
> Calm and rejoicing in the fearful war
> Of wave ruining on wave, and blast on blast
> Descending, and black flood on whirlpool driven
> With dark obliterating course, he sate
> (ll. 326- 9)

In these passages, the "dark obliterating course" might be ascribed as much to the tumult which the Poet's quest unleashes,

and which drives it to the verge of disintegration, as to the narrative which, in sustaining this tumult, stumbles over repetition (l. 327), and generates entropy in describing it. The limits of description also seem to be reached in the episode of the cave in lines 374- 384. This time, "the boat moved slowly", but the surrounding landscape has taken on the chaotic aspect which speed and movement created earlier on. In this landscape, height and depth are no longer opposites, but simultaneously characterise the same objects in a clash of perspectives, so that no level ground is left to measure ascending and descending movements ("the mountain" exposed "depths", ll. 374-5, "the flood's enormous volume fell" l. 376, "the mass / Filled...all that ample chasm" ll. 378-9).

As both the quest and the description are brought to a pause ("A pool of treacherous and tremendous calm", l. 386), it becomes apparent that the Poet's quest and the Narrator's narrative must be described in conjunction with each other. The Narrator engages with the Poet's torment to the same extent that the latter exposes the narrative to his ordeal. Conversely, the narrative subjects the Poet to an inhuman world by virtue of articulating a chaos which defies human endurance. As will now be examined, this is the case whether the description tends towards exhaustion or proliferation.

A contrast can be established between the Poet's isolation, conveyed in the lines 469-72, and the multifarious relations exhibited by the natural world, which may be taken as an instance

of the pervasive meaningfulness which escape the Poet, and from which he appears to be excluded:

> the parasites,
> Starred with ten thousand blossoms, flow around
> The grey trunks, and, as gamesome infants' eyes,
> With gentle meanings, and most innocent wiles,
> Fold their beams round the hearts of those that love,
> These twine their tendrils with the wedded boughs
> Uniting their close union; the woven leaves
> Make network of the dark blue light of day
> (ll. 439-46)

Nature exhibits a relatedness which the Poet is allegedly unable to achieve. Yet the lushness of this landscape consists in a mesh of potentially infinite relations, whose pervasive binding action meets as little resistance as it is unobtrusive, given the pleonastic phrase "Uniting their close union" (l. 445). These bonds proliferate to the point of dissolving, as was the case with the dream maiden's embrace, and the treacherous connotations are here underlined, just as they had been with the loss of the dream ("Alas! Alas! / Were limbs, and breath, and being intertwined / Thus treacherously?", ll. 207-9). It is clear, then, that this binding movement mirrors the Poet's own aporetic and paradoxically self-sustaining quest. However, the Narrator cannot delineate these profuse and wasteful twinings, as befits "parasites", without his description displaying the same parasitic tendency to be generated out of its own material (l. 445), and to take over from the Poet's process. The Poet has been drawn into the space of wandering and error, in search for a vision, "a prototype of his conception," which, if it could be possessed, would grant the true art of invention. In a word, the

Poet belongs to the contradiction of "the work as origin", as Blanchot defines it:

> No one who does not belong to the work as origin, who does not belong to that other time where the work is concerned for its essence, will ever create a work. But whoever does belong to that other time also belongs to the empty profundity of inertia where nothing is ever made of being. (58)

In this case, it is then possible to say that, through his narrative, the narrator comes as close as possible to the risks which the Poet runs in his quest. His narrative is endangered, and attracted, by the same inertia, according to the law of the "récit", or narration, which Blanchot describes as follows:

> Narration is movement towards a point which is not only unknown, ignored and strange but such that it seems to have no prior reality apart from this movement, yet is so compulsive that the narration's appeal depends on it to the extent that it cannot even 'begin' before it has reached it, while it is only narration, and the unpredictable movement of the narration which provide the space where this point becomes real, powerful and appealing. (59)

Simultaneously, the Narrator's narrative, in the very articulation in which it presents the Poet's process, subjects it to the treacherous movement of the quest.(60) For example, the portrait of the poet in lines 469-475 may be understood as the depiction of his exhaustion from the very vitality of nature which the Narrator lavishly describes, bringing his own narrative to the verge of dissolution. The Poet himself may appear as the victim of the Narrator's tale, for the sake of its telling. In this case, the mystery of the Poet's vision remains untouched, since there may be no other torment than the one which the narrator introduces.

The dilemma which the narrative represents for the Narrator is revealed, as he seems to deplore the unheeded loss of the Poet in an unfeeling world:

> But thou art fled
> Like some frail exhalation; which the dawn
> Robes in its golden beams, ah! thou hast fled!
> The brave, the gentle, and the beautiful,
> The child of grace and genius. Heartless things
> Are done and said i' the world, and many worms
> And beasts and men live on, and mighty Earth
> From sea and mountain, city and wilderness,
> In vesper low or joyous orison,
> Lifts still its solemn voice
> (ll. 688-96)

At the point where the narrative has been identified with the process of bringing the Poet to the foretold end of his journey, it is possible to perceive a hint of self-reproach (ll. 710-2) in the Narrator's regret, which mirrors his emphasis on the unresponsiveness of the surrounding world. As the Narrator's tale seems to have mirrored the intractable and impassive power unleashed by the Poet's search, it becomes the same thing to say that the Poet has fallen victim to this intractable force, and to the Narrator's articulation of it. This is why the Narrator seems to hold the principle of the Poet's nemesis when he succinctly surveys the elements of the landscape ("worms... beasts ... men", "sea and mountain, city and wilderness", "and mighty Earth") a final time.

Whilst this landscape is about to engulf the Poet (ll. 546- 53), confirming that the mind's desire was at the root of its own undoing, on the other hand, it can also be considered as the conditions allowing the Poet to run his course:

Thou canst no longer know or love the shapes
Of this phantasmal scene, who have to thee
Been purest ministers
(ll. 696-8)

These "have ... been purest ministers" to the Poet if it is understood that, in sustaining the Poet's exhausting quest, they have also made the moment of his final destruction unspecified. In the following passages, the "brooding care / That ever fed on its decaying flame" (ll. 246-7), the frenzy of the quest denying that rest is final, persists as the Poet's pulse sustaining the narrative, and as he turns into a tale:

no mortal pain or fear
Marred his repose, the influxes of sense,
And his own being unalloyed by pain,
Yet feebler and more feeble, calmly fed
The stream of thought

The Poet's blood,
That ever beat in mystic sympathy
With nature's ebb and flow, grew feebler still:

till the minutest ray
Was quenched, the pulse yet lingered in his heart.
It paused_it fluttered.
(ll. 640-4; ll. 651-3; ll. 657-9)

The Poet's survival within his quest sustains the Narrator's voice. The latter becomes, then, also the voice of nature beyond the merely natural, telling, "[I]n vesper low or joyous orison"(l. 694), that the Poet lives on ("babbling rivulet" l. 524, "ten thousand various tongues" l.549, "one voice / Alone inspired its echoes" l. 590-1). If the landscape is the Poet's process turned into a visible world which is articulated and depicted by the Narrator, then, the Poet is reunited with his vision as he surrenders to it (l. 594- 601). This symbolic

landscape, which the Poet has prepared for himself as he went along his search, contains a symbol of the Poet:

> A pine,
> Rock-rooted, stretched athwart the vacancy
> Its swinging boughs, to each inconstant blast
> Yielding one only response, at each pause
> In most familiar cadence, with the howl
> The thunder and the hiss of homeless streams
> Mingling its solemn song
> (ll. 561-7)

The pine spans, and is the measure of, the vacancy relating the Poet to everything from which he has been separated. As Vincent Newey has noted, this image "unites realism and aspiration," (61) and this vacancy is productive of a natural language, whereby speechless elements can speak. The Poet has then become the mediator of nature's speech. (62) While it is possible to say, that, with his vision, the Poet may have experienced "meaning," on the other hand, it is not the case that "the connection between meaning and language eludes him." (63) On the contrary, he experiences the absence of such a connection, and, as Rajan suggests, (64) in *Alastor*, Shelley faced the sense that there might be no ground behind language.

The loss of the Poet has shaken the Narrator's sense of being part of the brotherhood of Nature. Neil Fraistat notes that, starting with an hymn, he ends with an elegy, and that loss enters his vocabulary. (65) The reversal of the narrator's image of inspiration ("And moveless, as a long-forgotten lyre / Suspended in the solitary dome", ll. 42-3, "A fragile lute, on whose harmonious strings / The breath of heaven did wander", ll. 667-8) into a metaphor of death ("and those divinest lineaments,

/ Worn by the senseless wind, shall live alone" ll. 704-5) indicates that he has no confidence that despair arising from transience is an idle thought. The Narrator's sense that his tale, which is preserved from the pathless depths into which the Poet's erratic process seemed to draw it, seals the Poet's fate, and can only exacerbate the sense of loss ("Thou hast fled!" ll. 688, 695). In his escape from the Poet's fate, the Narrator is a defeated survivor for whom the Poet's demise becomes the supreme achievement, paradoxically vindicating his illusory quest:

> Art and eloquence,
> And all the shows o' the world are frail and vain
> To weep a loss that turns their lights to shade.
> (ll. 710-2)

However, the idealization of the Poet by the Narrator may be as mistaken as his earlier depiction of the quest as illusory, and this suspicion, even if the tale has changed the Narrator, makes *Alastor* an ambiguous poem.

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Alastor is an illustration of the reversal whereby inspiration, which is derived from a visionary moment, does not allow the poet to resort to creation as a power which he could use. Shelley's poem presents the epitome of the paradox whereby, in an inversion of creative genius, to renounce making the poetical work is taken as the poetical accomplishment *par excellence*. Yet, in *Alastor* Shelley also depicts the extent to which the absence of a work,

which is thus idealized to the point of suggesting the effect of a transcendence, is also a workless-ness. It is on this basis that, as analysed, the poem allows us, for instance, to dispute the view that the dream-union leads the Poet to know the potential relation of his self to some transcendence. Transcendence and the idealization of the absence of a finite work are substituted for the absence of work which Blanchot calls worklessness and which, according to this analysis, is represented by the process of the Poet's quest understood as a creative act that never takes place for lack of an interruption of the movement indefinitely leading to it. The idealization to which the Narrator yields at the end of the poem would lead to the view expressed in *A Defence of Poetry* (1820), that "the most glorious poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is probably a feeble shadow of the original conception of the poet" (66) to be taken as a valorization of the ineffable. However, such a valorization of the ineffable tends to obstruct the fact that the finite, limited work that is made, is not the cancellation of this movement "into a space where truth lacks, where limits have disappeared," (67) but, on the contrary the blatant manifestation of it. It is possible to suggest that in *Alastor* Shelley shows his awareness that the work of literature reclaims the powerlessness within "le souci réalisateur" (purposeful action). (68)

CHAPTER FOUR

Julian and Maddalo (1819)

This Chapter will examine *Julian and Maddalo* (1819). As a number of critics have argued, the debates in *Alastor* and *Julian and Maddalo* are very similar. It is possible to see the poem in terms of the usual psychic strife around the validity of the mind's aspirations. According to Wasserman, "Julian and Maddalo are Shelley's divided and conflicting selves skeptically confronting each other, as they do in *Alastor;* and the poem, in effect, is Shelley's debate with himself" (1). Tim Clark also suggests the existence of a strong link between the two poems:

> the debate between Julian and Maddalo, concerning the mind's power to realize the apprehension of the good, is a continuation on an interpersonal level, of the intrapersonal debates on the mind's potential power over itself conducted in Shelley's work during 1815-16. (2)

On top of these concerns, *Julian and Maddalo* also explores the relation between reality and the peculiar derangement which this reality is supposed to undergo in poetry, which the figure of the Maniac may be understood to convey. With some critical distance, the poem reflects the debate between Shelley and Byron around their differing poetical practices and shared interest in the figure of Torquato Tasso, as "the unjustly persecuted poet." (3) This analysis will examine the dichotomy between the non-alienated world of sanity, represented by Julian and Maddalo, and

the alienated world of the Maniac, and the questions involved in the paradox of sanity giving voice to insanity. Bearing in mind Blanchot's statement that the "absence of work ... is the other name for madness," (4) this study will explore the ways in which *Julian and Maddalo* illuminates Shelley's conception of poetical creation.

Interpretation and Misinterpretation.

The issue of the tension between interpretation and misinterpretation lies at the core of *Julian and Maddalo*, because the framing structure of the conversation poem is foregrounded. This issue relates directly to the double status of the poetical work as product and process, the unity of which it was one of the aims of romantic literary theory to conceptualize. It concerns the way in which we conceive the relations between the three characters as the product of the poem, and the way in which we use the poem in order to build such an understanding, in which case the process of the poem is the main focus. The encounter between the sane and the insane may be a way to test the frontier between the two. Qualms concerning the imposition of the order of the sane world upon insanity testify to an anxiety not to take the conceptions of the sane world for granted, which is another way of wishing for a real division between sanity and insanity. Tracy Ware has underlined the danger of such an imposition in her analysis of Julian and Maddalo's "interpretation" of the Maniac's ravings:

> Therefore the poem promises to confirm Fish's assertion that interpretation always operates according to prior assumptions, and that its operation is self-fulfilling:'interpretation is not the art of construing but the art of constructing.'(5)

This anxiety concerns the fact that the use of the Maniac as a case in point, and for the benefit of an argument, as Julian and Maddalo appear to do, is a way of fitting him within a preexistent framework. The next stage in this framing structure, is inherent in the fact that sanity and madness may be contrasted with the result of ironically exchanging places. And the next stage again, within this endless series of mirroring effects, can be found in the instance of the "mocking rapport" between the insane and the sane, as mentioned by McLennan in his analysis of visits to madhouses in the eighteenth century:

> the display of madness as a spectacle for those visiting New Bethlem promoted a self-consciousness and self-referring play on madness: [the inmates of Bedlam] may well have 'acted crazy' to establish a mocking rapport with the sane, turning all into a gallery of distorting mirrors.(6)

In many ways, *Julian and Maddalo* prepares for the scenario of a misunderstanding of the Maniac by Julian and Maddalo, and tempts the reader with the notion that, faced with the raw fact of emotion (the Maniac), rationalizing thought (Julian versus Maddalo) can only be helpless.

Julian and Maddalo agree on the existence of a gap between men's aspirations and the world as it is. Their difference lies in the fact that Julian believes that such a gap can be bridged through man's power over his mind (ll. 182-6), whereas Maddalo sees man

as weak and inevitably frustrated in a world which is governed by irrational forces (ll. 120-30). In their opposition, Julian and Maddalo believe themselves to be poles apart, and their positions are indeed symmetrical. In their conversation, they do not so much try to disprove each other's theory, as readily substitute each other in the Maniac's place, in order to each confirm his own theory. The paradox consists, on the one hand, in Maddalo seeing insanity as the outcome of Julian's idealistic attitude in a world dominated by irrational forces:

> I knew one like you
> Who to this city came some months ago,
> With whom I argued in this sort, and he
> Is now gone mad, _ and so he answered me,_
> Poor fellow !
> (ll. 195-9)

On the other hand, Julian attributes the Maniac's madness to his wilful pride and impatience, that is, to Maddalo's flaws in Julian's eyes:

> 'I hope to prove the induction otherwise,
> And that a want of that true theory, still,
> Which seeks a "soul of goodness" in things ill
> Or in himself or others, has thus bowed
> His being _ there are some by nature proud,
> Who patient in all else demand but this _
> To love and be beloved with gentleness;
> And being scorned, what wonder if they die
> Some living death ? this is not destiny
> But man's own wilful ill.'
> (ll. 202-11)

First, Julian and Maddalo pass judgment before even seeing the Maniac, whom they both intend to use as an example. They can, therefore, be said to be dealing, at least at this stage, only with an abstraction, that is, with their own preconception of madness. Julian and Maddalo merely frame each other within their

own world view. To this extent they misunderstand each other, and it is hardly surprising that, before visiting the Maniac, they are liable to misunderstand him. For each of them, madness can only affect the other. The fact that each perfectly fits the role of potential maniac in the other's world view, without this bringing some home truths to either, also suggests that the conversation is in fact a dialogue of the deaf. There is no way in which Julian and Maddalo, who are so similar, can meet on any ground. As a matter of fact, neither character actually shifts his grounds in order to meet his 'adversarius' in his own terms. Maddalo merely points at "a better station" (l. 87). The debate, being static, can hardly be conclusive.

However, such conclusion is presented as irrelevant. The issue of the validity of idealism as an adequate response to the human condition seems to be no longer to the point by the end of the poem, as Julian and Maddalo have forgotten their debate. As Ware has noted, the Maniac "conflates" Julian's and Maddalo's apparently opposed theories, and further quoting Wasserman, she notes: "Shelley has drawn the Maniac as both a utopian theorist like Julian and an impatient idealist like Maddalo." (7) The Maniac being a conflation of both of them, it is surprising that each does not, instead, feel confirmed in his position. The breakdown of the opposition between Julian and Maddalo ruins any interpretation of the poem which favours one point of view over the other:

> then we lingered not,
> Although our argument was quite forgot,
> But calling the attendants, went to dine

At Maddalo's; yet neither cheer nor wine
could give us spirits, for we talked of him
And nothing else, till daylight made stars dim;
And we agreed his was some dreadful ill
(11.519-25)

Whereas the visit to the Maniac can be presented as a test for Julian's and Maddalo's views of human life, the opposition which is generally seen between them does not fully account for the fact that they are both equally and similarly touched by the Maniac. Despite the doubts cast on their perception of the madman, at no point is it suggested that they do misunderstand him. They are touched in a way for which they know their words cannot account ('And we agreed his was some dreadful ill / Wrought on him boldly, yet unspeakable,/ By a dear friend', ll. 525-7). Julian and Maddalo have encountered an embodiment of the term which they so readily throw at each other, which they refrain from doing, after the visit to the Maniac.

The issue of the adequacy of Julian and Maddalo's perception of the Maniac remains unsettled since, as suggested, there is no way of measuring adequacy or inadequacy other than against the evidence of the Maniac's speech itself. It is possible, for instance, to stress the ambiguity of the two friends' understanding of the madman, which lies in the fact that, although they both stress the Maniac's alteration, they cannot help seeing aspects in him which show that he has, to some extent, remained as he was:

'Nay, this was kind of you _ he has no claim,
As the world says'_ 'None _ but the very same
Which I on all mankind were I as he
Fallen to such deep reverse

(ll. 262-5)

he had store
Of friends and fortune once, as we could guess
From his nice habits and his gentleness
(ll. 534-6)

The ambiguity of the two friends' position finds its epitome in Maddalo's compassionate gesture:

so I fitted up for him
Those rooms beside the sea, to please his whim
and sent him busts and books and urns for flowers,
Which had adorned his life in happier hour,
And instruments of music
(ll. 252-6)

For Maddalo, the Maniac has not changed so much that he cannot appreciate that which he used to, and the Maniac is not so different from Maddalo himself that the latter cannot imagine "fall[ing] to such deep reverse" (l. 265). This may confirm the critical role of insanity upon sanity, since the sane readily identify with the insane. On the other hand, the Maniac may simply be misunderstood by the two friends, who unwittingly construct his persona on the basis of their own experience and knowledge. Maddalo's gifts to the Maniac ironically resemble the objects which Julian sees as part of his self-indulgent exile:

books are there,
Pictures, and casts from all those statues fair
Which were twin-born with poetry
(ll. 554-6)

As a result, the Maniac might be locked in the madhouse precisely because Julian and Maddalo believe so easily that they can identify with him, just as they could put each other in the role of potential madman. Madness appears to be all the more easily cut off and locked in, as it is measured by common norms, and appropriated by the world of reason. Julian and Maddalo would

then be accomplices to putting an end to the hope of ever understanding the Maniac on his own grounds.

According to the same logic ruled by mirror effects between sanity and insanity, it is possible to say that alienation and exile characterize all three personae, albeit to different extents. Maddalo is a stranger in his own country ("COUNT MADDALO is a Venetian noblemen of ancient family and of great fortune, who without mixing much in the society of his countrymen, resides chiefly at his magnificent palace in that city"), (8) and Julian apparently enjoys a cultivated exile away from England (ll. 548-58). The two friends' liberal views imply a critical distance from their societies. Maddalo could have been "the redeemer of his degraded country." Julian is "passionately attached to those philosophical notions which assert the power of man over his mind, and the immense improvements of which, by the extinction of certain moral superstitions, human society may be yet susceptible". As for the Maniac, he has become a stranger to the world allegedly through an initial sense of loss and abandonment:

> 'he came
> To Venice a dejected man, and fame
> Said he was wealthy, or he had been so;
> Some thought the loss of fortune wrought woe;
>
> A lady came with him from France, and when
> She left him and returned, he wandered then
> About yon lonely isles of desert sand
> Till he grew wild
> (ll. 232-5, 246-9)

The mirroring effects between the Maniac and his visitors lead to the realization that Julian and Maddalo debating outside their communities (to which they do not address themselves, and which

cannot hear them, except in the case of Julian's present narrative), are not so dissimilar from the Maniac endlessly raving within the confines of his prison. Julian and Maddalo would be sane to the extent that they can manage an isolation which is a torture to the Maniac. Similarly, Julian's exaltation during the horse ride, foreshadows the devastation of the Maniac's condition. The fact that Julian sentimentally enjoys "all waste" (l. 16) underlines his difference from the Maniac, since in his comfortable exile, Julian is only relatively at odds with society. The boundlessness and barrenness of the landscape, which Julian is able to enjoy is also a reversed image for the Maniac's prison. The conversational style which characterizes Julian's speech protects him from the actual danger which a term like "waste" involves. The Maniac's condition reflects on the condition of the two friends as the tame version of his own. The poem, then, lends itself to a regress of interpretations for lack of a position from which the opposition between sanity and insanity could be explained and justified.

It is apparent that the example of the Maniac has not settled the friends' debate on the grounds on, nor in the terms in which, it had been conducted - so much does the term "forgot" suggest. When it comes to concluding on the Maniac's state, both Julian and Maddalo agree on a negative, if vague, judgment ("some dreadful ill"). They stand by the version of unrequited love :

> And we agreed his was some dreadful ill
> Wrought on him boldly, yet unspeakable,
> By a dear friend; some deadly change in love
> Of one vowed deeply which he dreamed not of;
> For whose sake he, it seemed, had fixed a blot

Of falsehood on his mind which flourished not
But in the light of all-beholding truth;
And having stamped this canker on his youth
She had abandoned him
(11. 525 - 33)

The vague term "ill" does not so much explain the Maniac's plight, as testifies to the two friends' emotional reaction to it. This qualification of the Maniac's situation appears both tautological (it adds nothing to an understanding of the Maniac) and inappropriate. The oppositions around which Julian articulates his summary do not so much explain the Maniac's madness, as explain it away. In their brevity and abruptness, they cannot account for the Maniac's long-winded and ever to be repeated oscillations from emotion to emotion. The attempt at rationalization is as ineffectual as the Maniac's ravings are. Yet, as suggested, the poem does not indicate that Julian and Maddalo misunderstand the Maniac, even if, as Cronin, points out, "there is no way in which the friends can assimilate such an outburst with their comfortably serious debate." (9) However, to "assimilate" the Maniac is precisely the danger to which, as Ware points out, the two friends are also exposed. Whichever way Julian and Maddalo's reaction is construed, the two characters are inevitably subjected to the contradictory demand of understanding without objectifying, that is, of grasping uniqueness.

The grounds on which the characters may be said to decipher the Maniac, are the means by which they are taken in by a web of mirror effects built by the poem, and, also, the means by which the reader constructs an understanding of their apprehension. As

the few examples given above indicate, the poem allows an infinite number of relations, connections, comparisons and contrasts to be made, as an effect of bringing the three personae together. The three personae are infinitely relevant to one another. There is nothing or no-one that cannot be related to something or someone else. To suggest that such relations inevitably slight or ignore the uniqueness of each, and, in this case, primarily of the Maniac, is to believe in the possibility of a transparent understanding, a transparent relation between words and objects, and absolute knowledge. This is precisely the demand to which the reproach that Julian and Maddalo fail to assimilate the madman's extreme situation subjects them. To "understand" the Maniac would, then, presumably, require Julian to embrace the whole scope of the Maniac's emotional fluctuations, which the terms of his summary (ll. 525-36) allegedly fail to convey. The demand for wholeness is best exemplified by Cronin's argument that "The beliefs of Julian and Maddalo [as presented in the conversation part of the poem] are inadequate because the feelings on which they are based are limited, they do not comprehend their complete experience of life. Their theories are therefore at odds with their practice." (10) It would require Julian and Maddalo to step outside of themselves in order to witness the extent to which the latter's stark view of humanity contrasts with his easy conversation, and the former's professed love of humanity is easy to cultivate in solitude. The mere fact of identifying the Maniac's particular condition with fairly ordinary circumstances, the mere fact of

assimilating it to a norm, proves any interpretation of it, and any gloss, to be wide of the mark.

However, the unsuitability of their words, which fail to assess the extent of the Maniac's plight, does not escape the two friends ("and how much more / Might be his woe, we guessed not," ll. 533-4). Julian and Maddalo's perception of the Maniac may be inherently defective, and the blatant contradictions which the Maniac is powerless to resolve may well be missed by so-called sane individuals such as Julian and Maddalo. However, the adoption of such misgivings regarding this particular issue would amount to a misreading of Julian's and Maddalo's reception of the Maniac's speech. The demand by certain critics that the two friends' understanding be interpreted as adequate to its object, that is, to the Maniac's speech, would require a direct access to their immediate hearing of this speech, exempt from the reproach that it is merely an indirect appropriation of it. As suggested, it would, for instance, require Julian to go over the whole scope of the Maniac's emotional fluctuations. Yet, this is precisely the demand which the poem meets in making Julian's older self give voice to an insane speech, which he overheard. On the other hand, the Maniac resists understanding, and, to this extent, reflects, and fits the putative inadequacy of any attempt to understand him only too well, leaving no possibility of indicating the measure to which the understanding is inadequate. In any case, Julian seems to forestall the reproach of unduly imposing his own rational framework upon the Maniac, since he withdraws from passing judgment, thereby admitting that his

intervention is inconsequential: "the unconnected exclamations of his agony will perhaps be found a sufficient comment for the text of every heart." (11) The paradox of this poem is that the debate initially taking place, and revolving around notions of power, mastery and achievement, is overshadowed by the figure of the Maniac, who is apparently the antithesis of such notions. To listen to the Maniac's soliloquy amounts to the challenge of understanding it on its own grounds.

Uniqueness.

Contrary to Tracy Ware's interpretation, which sees the Maniac as entertaining misconceived thoughts ("His account of his condition is already an interpretation of it, but the account is incoherent because it is torn by conflicting assumptions," 12) the Maniac's speech is not to be taken as an account of the events which took place between the lady and him. In this sense, it is not even partial in the sense that it would present only one side of the story. The same phenomenon which turns interpretation into an endless series of mirroring effects, affects the rationalization of the Maniac's plight. For instance Bernard A. Hirsch argues: "[the Maniac] has faithfully followed a vision which, because it was within his power to perceive, seemed truth itself. That vision has now become the 'pain' which shadows him, kept alive by the persistence of his imagination." (13) The impossibility of pinning down a cause or origin is illustrated in Hirsch's analysis. The origin of the Maniac's

plight lies, according to Hirsch, in his excessive idealization of his vision of the lady, and in his endeavour to maintain this illusion in spite of "the infestation of experience." Such an interpretation implies that the Maniac's madness results from a tension between his desire and the world as it is, which the Maniac somehow does not fail to perceive. This leads Hirsch to draw a distinction between the Maniac's "spirit mate", as he idealized her, and "as she is": "[S]he has proven to be a false vision, a "mockery" and in that sense is dead to him." If the Maniac is deceived, he also cannot be undeceived. As the different versions of the "lady" are both depicted within the Maniac's discourse, no indication can distinguish the 'real' lady from the idealized one.

Notwithstanding the fact that all these versions might even refer to different persons, if the Maniac's speech is the outcome of his misguided idealism, then so are both versions of the lady. The "mockery" is not part of reality "as it is", but no less ideal than the "spirit's mate". According to this interpretation also, the Maniac is not so mad that he does not perceive the gap between his desire and reality, but only refuses to acknowledge it. Hirsch's interpretation reintroduces intervals of lucidity within the Maniac's speech so as to rationalize his madness, whereas such intervals are already part of, and cannot be dissociated from, the Maniac's speech. It is inevitable that the causal status of the fantasy which Hirsch identifies is undone in the course of his analysis. Because of this identification of idealism and madness, Hirsch is led to a kind of reversal of his

account. At first, he identifies deceptive idealism as a cause for madness, then it seems that madness is an indicator of the Maniac's idealism: "his very folly testifies to the strength of his commitment to her." (14) In the end, the causal relation between the two has collapsed: idealism is madness, and vice versa. This implies that any idealist is a madman, whether his aspirations have been denied by reality or not. If madness is independent from reality's sanction, then it cannot derive from the disappointment of misplaced expectations, or, rather such expectations can never be verified as being misplaced. This is precisely the Maniac's plight. The cause of his insanity is indistinguishable from the persistence of its power to affect. If the terms of Julian and Maddalo's understanding of the Maniac's plight, which are also those of Hirsch's analysis mentioned earlier, are something to go by, then it is not only the Maniac's "own idealized conceptions" which are "the cause of his grief," (15) and have prepared him for madness, but also the sudden loss of them which have altered him radically. The explanation loses its grip on the problem, as the Maniac's speech supplies the elements which simultaneously make and un-make his tale, without resolution.

From his account of his misfortune, it is impossible for an outside observer to localize the point at which he parted from reality. As Felman, in her account of Foucault's *Histoire de la folie*, remarks: "the mad subject cannot situate himself within his fiction." (16) The Maniac's speech is a speech which cannot explain its reasons or its cause. Events, as they took place, are

irretrievable. To attribute a cause or origin is to reintroduce its effect everywhere. To reintroduce it everywhere is to be unable to pin it down as cause. The cause (the lady) is incriminated through its enduring effect despite its disappearance. The Maniac's world is not even ruled by the law of non-contradiction. The negation of disillusion has not affected the memory of his dream. Negation seems to have lost any logical meaning. (17)

For all his madness, the Maniac is in the position of the subject who, as Hirsch puts it, because of his power to perceive something, i.e., a vision in the absence of an object to support it, takes it as a truth. As in the situation where ordinary consciousness applies, he fails to make the departure between his mind and the outside, because there is no criterion by which to attribute his perception to his own creation.

The prominent aspect of the Maniac's soliloquy is the Maniac's oscillation from emotion to contrary emotion, and not so much the adequacy of either feeling to the addressee. That the Maniac appears to appeal to various personae only emphasizes the fluctuation of his emotions. The Maniac's speech goes through a whole range of abuse and self-humiliation within the space of ten lines:

> 'Nay, was it I who wooed thee to this breast
> Which, like a serpent, thou envenomest
> As in repayment of the warmth it lent ?
> (ll. 398-400)
>
> Never one
> Humbled himself before, as I have done !

Even the instinctive worm on which we tread
Turns, though it wounds not_then with prostrate head
Sinks in the dust and writhes like me-and dies ?
No: wears a living death of agonies !
(11. 410-6)

As is apparent in the previous passage, not only does the Maniac fluctuate from reproach to self-debasement, but emotions can also be transformed into their opposite, as self-debasement is used as a way of self-aggrandizement.

The Maniac's plight is also characterised by a peculiar acknowledgement of the terms which he sees the lady apply to himself, so that nothing seems to remain of him but the words which have been used to characterize him. When he reports the lady's words as they were addressed to him, the Maniac ironically sounds as if he claimed her abusive terms " deep pollution" and "loathed embrace" as his own :

'That you had never seen me_never heard
My voice, and more than all had ne'er endured
The deep pollution of my loathed embrace
(11. 420-2)

In the next line, as the hyphens indicate, the reference of the pronoun 'you' may have changed from first person pronoun in reported speech to the status of hallucinated addressee whom the Maniac apostrophizes ("That your eyes ne'er had lied love in my face" 1. 423). However, the difference in the use of the same pronoun is blurred so as to suggest that the lady herself regretted "lying love in [the Maniac's] face". The ambiguity about the speaker of the following lines continues:

That, like some maniac monk, I had torn out
The nerves of manhood by their bleeding root

With mine own quivering fingers
(l. 424-6)

Mutilation can be called upon the Maniac by the lady, or by the Maniac upon himself. In the latter case, the term "maniac", used with an ironic tinge by the madman, applies to him as in a double irony. On the other hand, the Maniac might be speaking a truth to which he is himself blind, because, immersed as he is in his own world, he can take no distance from it. Such would be, in the end, the root of his madness: unlike Julian and Maddalo, the Maniac cannot talk about his position, he can only speak through it. He is exterior to the possibility of punctual self-presence. Like the Poet of *Alastor*, the Maniac can be said to be in the 'desert' as Blanchot understands it: "the desert is the exterior in which one cannot remain, since to be there is always already to be outside." (18).

It is precisely the lack of punctual self-presence which prevents the Maniac from settling in a balanced relationship with the lady: a relationship in which the self-identity of each of them would be preserved. Yet, such reserve is open to suspicion, while the collapse of reserve leads to indiscriminate reproach. In the following passage, identities have been blurred, before being united _to be instantly "disunite[d]" in the first person plural:

so that ne'er
Our hearts had for a moment mingled there
To disunite in horror
(ll. 426-8)

Agreement in horror has been reached by the two personae: the lady supposedly feeling horror for the Maniac, and the latter

feeling horror at her rejecting him. Both coincide in their disjunctive feelings. Eventually, the Maniac seems to be identifying with his punishment:

> 'It were
> A cruel punishment for one most cruel,
> If such can love, to make that love the fuel
> Of the mind's hell
> (ll. 438-41)

The Maniac might be seen to endorse or even justify the lady's "scorn" (l. 355, 356), when he compares himself to a worm (l. 412-9). His ability to identify with and to be embodied in the words used to describe him, goes hand in hand with his capacity to somehow become the lady as she speaks through his mouth. The Maniac and the lady appear interchangeable in the two echoing passages:

> I thought
> That thou wert she who said, "You kiss me not
> Ever, I fear you do not love me now" _
> In truth I loved even to my overthrow
> Her, who would fain forget these words: but they
> Cling to her mind, and cannot pass away.
> (ll, 403-7)

> these were not
> With thee, like some suppressed and hideous thought
> which flits athwart our musings, but can find
> No rest within a pure and gentle mind...
> Thou sealedst them with many a bare broad word,
> And searedst my memory o'er them,_for I heard
> And can forget not

Just as the Maniac cannot forget the curse which the lady called down upon him ("for I heard / and can forget not" ll. 433-4)_ he, unlike the lady, cannot forget the sweet words which he thinks she addressed to him. The qualification " I thought / That thou wert" casts doubt on the very possibility of assessing the Maniac's interpretation of events. The phrase conveys both the

Maniac's inability to recognize the lady after her unexpected change, and, precisely, his mistaking her for the person she may never have been. So much does the delayed position of the pronoun 'her' (l. 406) suggest in these lines, where the Maniac appears to have been overcome by his love, and, simultaneously, to have overcome or consumed the lady, thereby losing her:

> In truth I loved even to my overthrow
> Her
> (ll. 405-6)

Absolute Knowledge.

The paradox of the Maniac's situation lies in the fact that neither the memory of his dream nor its denial as falsehood can take precedence one over the other. The breach that apparently initiated the Maniac's alienation is presented as waking up from a dream. As in *Alastor*, the image of the dream does not allow for any transition or any link between sleep and waking, so that the two conditions cannot be contrasted with each other. To this extent, the Maniac's claim that he ever woke might even be part of his delirium. The passage from dream to waking which cannot be witnessed is, for the Maniac, not a passage:

> as one dreaming
> Of sweetest peace I woke, and found my state
> Such as it is.
> (ll. 335-7)

His inability to situate himself within his fiction corresponds to a wish for absolute knowledge or absolute consciousness, that is, also, a desire for life without difference, and a wish to

witness a passage as passage. This may be likened to the demand which, from an anxiety not to impose a rational order upon insanity, would be placed upon Julian and Maddalo not to reduce the Maniac's irreducible difference, and not to assimilate his uniqueness to anything else. The Maniac's plight is not that he sees everything only from his position, but that, precisely, he sees everything, like the person who, because of his power to perceive a thing, takes it as truth. Awakening has left the Maniac only with the awareness of a disillusion which, however, cannot affect his lost dream. The dream has not been ruined by its denial, because dream and denial have nothing in common. The Maniac's awakening from what can only retrospectively appear as falsehood, does not indicate any possible rectification or correction. The Maniac has himself changed and become unrecognizable. He has been divided in a way which does not allow him to put himself together again. There is no way of telling whether the deluded Maniac and the disillusioned Maniac are not the same.

The Maniac is subject to repetition without progression, because of the lack of underlying continuity which would allow for progression. In the Maniac's speech, no event or emotion has the time to offer a true face. Every event is irretrievable, and can only be repeated. The Maniac suffers as much from the mutability of events, as from the evanescent structures within this mutability, i.e., from the arrangements which are not arranged despite their impermanence, but whose appearance is an effect of their impermanence (ll. 405-7, ll. 428-34). Suffering from the

mutability of impermanent beliefs and emotions, he wishes that there had been none:

> 'That you had never seen me_never heard
> My voice, and more than all had ne'er endured
> The deep pollution of my loathed embrace
> That your eyes ne'er had lied love in my face
> (11. 420-3)
>
> the air
> Closes upon my accents, as despair
> Upon my heart _ let death upon despair!
> (11. 508-10)

His wish for a total dissolution reproduces his wish for total visibility and knowledge. He also experiences the fact that dissolution is never complete, as he cannot even hold onto the notion of an impossibility which could not be experienced. He already goes through a kind of death which does not bring him to his end:

> Even the instinctive worm on which we tread
> Turns, though it wound not_ then with prostrate head
> Sinks in the dust and writhes like me _ and dies ?
> No: wears a living death of agonies !
> As the slow shadows of the pointed grass
> Mark the eternal periods, his pangs pass
> Slow, ever-moving,_ making moments be
> As mine seem _ each an immortality !
> (11. 412-1)
>
> 'Month after month,' he cried, 'to bear this load
> And as a jade urged by the whip and goad
> To drag life on, which like a heavy chain
> Lengthens behind many a link of pain !
> (11. 300-3)

It is in this sense that his wish for absolute knowledge forces him to be unfaithful to that knowledge. Since the wish for absolute knowledge is the wish for the truth of his encounter with "the lady", which would also be his true tale putting an end to all interpretations and commentaries, it is clear that the

Maniac endures the fragmentary exigency whereby the very attempt to give this tale only exacerbates the distance from its goal. The Maniac inveighs against the fact of having been irretrievably affected (an event which, as will be later examined, Julian, for one, puts to different effect) as if this could be a complete event without further repercussion.

If the Maniac can be seen as entertaining both Julian's and Maddalo's points of view, that is to say, faith in an idealised vision, and the persuasion that it is bound to be destroyed, this is because these are not merely thoughts for the Maniac, but different dimensions which do not communicate with each other without subjecting the Maniac to the whole range of their alteration. Love and hate, or reproach and compassion are not merely implied in each other, but each emotion, and the name which it bears, have never corresponded to each other. Names or words, and whatever they might refer to, can be indiscriminately blamed with falsehood ('If such can love, to make that love the fuel / Of the mind's hell; hate, scorn, remorse, despair', ll. 440-1, 'I have not dwindled / Nor changed in mind or body, or in aught / But as love changes what it loveth not', ll. 469-71), just as the Maniac and the lady, Julian and Maddalo, sanity and insanity under the demand for interpretation, indiscriminately exchange places without the resolution that is expected from the process. Like Julian and Maddalo in their debate, like any interpretation, the Maniac wants a final word ('How vain / Are words! l. 472-3), thereby encountering the unjustifiable separation between name and thing, the gap which, in *La Part du*

feu, Blanchot describes as follows: "this absence which is included in every word and is linked to its power to impart meaning, and to draw the thing away in order to signify it." (19)

The fragmentary exigency manifests itself in that there are as many stages and occasions to suffer as there are words to describe them, in an ever deepening, searching movement which expands the separation relating names and things (But that I cannot bear more altered faces / Than needs must be, more changed and cold embraces / More misery, disappointment, and mistrust / To own me for their father, ll. 312-5). The Maniac's speech, in which there is always something else to say, acts as the dispossession of the only true speech, whereby it is revealed that "when speaking, we defer from speaking." (20) The Maniac suffers from language being the lack of that which it speaks, and his speech is then an instance of the imaginary language which Blanchot defines in *L'Espace littéraire*: "everything is speech, but... speech [being] nothing but the appearance of that which has disappeared, is imaginary, ceaseless, interminable." (21)

Ambiguity.

On the basis of the interpretation offered in this analysis, it is easier to understand that both Julian and Maddalo see the Maniac's speech as evoking, and, at the same time, being short of, poetry. Julian sees a lack of mastery, of "measure" (l. 542)

in the Maniac's speech, whereas Maddalo locates the motivation of the speech in "suffering" :

> 'Most wretched men
> Are cradled into poetry by wrong,
> They learn in suffering what they teach in song.'
> (ll. 544-6)

Maddalo's comment sounds like a cynical version of 'furor poeticus', and appears to be merely the opposite of a traditional conception of inspiration as a superior power which operates through the subjectivity of the inspired poet. However, the Maniac is neither the medium of a superior power, nor the victim of his own failure to master expression, but he is delivering a kind of language which, in a world of manifestation, can only appear as failure. The Maniac destabilizes Julian and Maddalo because, far from expressing a supposed unity of emotion before the negative dissociation of ratiocinative discourse, he rather represents the undermining of such unity. This subversion is an intensified version of the loss of being in its purity and originality, on which language, in the separation between word and thing, relies.

As was suggested in Chapter Two, Shelley's view of language is marked by a lack of binary stability in the relationship between word and thing, which is the source of its creative, but also of its ideological, power. This loss of being or "life" lies at the root of Blanchot's description of two vesions of comprehension in terms of death, rather than negation (22): "death is sometimes truth's elaboration in the world", "the possibility of comprehension", that is, the rule of Julian and Maddalo's

rational order, and it is "sometimes the perpetuaty of that which admits neither beginning nor end", which is the Maniac's plight. (23) Blanchot insists on the tension between these two versions, a tension which is central to his notion of the work of literature and to his understanding of the way in which the work is made. To the extent that the work must be made into a definite artwork, it testifies to possibility and to a certain negative power, as in the first sense of negation or death given above. But, to the extent that the work involves a shaping process which ruins the finality of definition, it seems to have already destroyed "the vast generality of being which necessarily withdraws from all particular determination, but alone suffices ...[as the] object of poetry." (24) Neither version, in Blanchot's notion of the work of literature, is able to cancel the other out. Julian and Maddalo, on the one hand, and the Maniac, on the other hand, would then represent these two versions of the loss of life in their dissymmetry. However, the fact that Julian gives voice to the Maniac, and allows his erring speech to come into the poem, leads to an examination of the way in which these two versions can communicate.

Giving Voice to the Maniac.

The same contradictory demands to which interpretation has been subjected, and which reflect the Maniac's concern that language is necessarily the lack of that which it speaks, inevitably stretch the understanding of Julian's response between the

notions of adequacy and betrayal. It is easy to overlook the fact that the Maniac's speech is a speech only to the extent that Julian reports it, and gives it a voice. In overhearing the Maniac, Julian and Maddalo appear to reproduce the dispossessing structure which language represents towards 'life without a difference'. The two listeners appear to "steal" (l. 297) his speech from the Maniac, as Tracy Ware's point about Julian's narrative suggests: "In purveying the Maniac's speech as part of his own narrative, Julian packages and sells the reader something that is not really his to give." (25) Ware underlines the potential distortion which its recuperation into a narrative may effect upon the Maniac's speech, which is defiant of any structure of inclusion or comprehension, to the point of preventing any point of entry into it. However, Ware's objection does not fully hold since, as already argued, the Maniac's speech does not represent a confession to which he would own up. For the madman, language acts as the loss of any truth which it could convey. The Maniac's speech is precisely neither a property nor an address. On the contrary, Ware's remark aptly underlines the kind of misdirection which is inherent in the Maniac's speech. The Maniac's words can only be heard obliquely. The powerless words of the Maniac cannot aim at reaching anybody, and they turn their hearers into a ghostly audience. The alternative which Ware does not seem ready to contemplate, is that the Maniac's speech must have become "Julian"'s precisely to the extent that he has become a persona whom the Maniac does not address.

The poem provides elements whereby it can be understood that the Maniac's speech has become Julian's in changing him to the point that he has been able to report it, and, maybe, in this way, dispose of it. The web of mirror effects within which the characters are set unwittingly do not leave the characters unaffected, even as these same effects underline the limitation and determination of their position and their perception. The mirror effects ironically relating the sane and the insane are also conducive to a contamination between the two. The apparently innocuous superlatives in Julian's slightly detached conclusion, "dreadful", "unspeakable", "deadly" and "deeply" (ll. 525-8) echo the Maniac's pathetic tones, and betray the "deep tenderness that maniac wrought / Within [him]" (ll. 566-7). This may be considered as the result of the fact that, for example, while the persona of the Maniac casts an ironical light on Julian's enjoyment of "all waste," (l. 14) Julian cannot give his account without bringing the Maniac's version of waste as dispossession and confinement into play.

Referring to the same passage (lines 14-17), Cronin notes that, as Julian "responds actively to his surroundings and converts the most unlikely scenery into a metaphor for his magnanimity" (a tendency towards self-aggrandizement which he shares with the Maniac), the poem simultaneously foregrounds "a disparity between the landscape as it is and as it is perceived". (26) Cronin's point is more relevant to this argument if it is agreed that "the landscape as it is" can only appear by means of the disparity which Julian's perception creates, and that, to this extent, it

is not so much a pre-existing norm, as attendant to Julian's earlier idealism, indicating the slight dissemblance inherent in any perception. Consequently, while Julian may not suspect the disparity or the meaning with which the parallel with the Maniac endows his words, his changeability and his susceptibility to such meaning are conveyed in the poem in the movement whereby he becomes part of the unspoken, relating work of the poem. It may be suggested that this is the ghostly persona who harkens to the Maniac. The "positions" within which interpretation has situated Julian and Maddalo, have also become the "ministers" of their change.

More importantly, if such is the "Julian" who harkens to the Maniac, it appears that he is the creation of the poem *Julian and Maddalo*, which includes the source of its telling in the Maniac's soliloquy. It is then possible to see the rest of the poem as directed towards ensuring that Julian does impart the Maniac's soliloquy otherwise than as "unconnected exclamations," but, in contrast, as a poem, since it is this poem which gives existence to the persona who harkened to it. In this case, *Julian and Maddalo* also contains one of the paradoxical conditions under which, for Blanchot, the work of literature is made, and which is a direct consequence of the fact that one cannot raise oneself from the world to art. On the contrary, "[T]o say that the poet only exists after the poem means that he receives his "reality" from the poem, but that he does not dispose of this reality except in order to make the poem possible." (27) In listening to the Maniac Julian listens to a poem which is not yet, (28) and

which may be considered as the inspiration for Julian's poem. It remains to explore how, in the remaining part of the poem, Julian makes the poem possible, and how this involves reconsidering his turning away from the Maniac, and his decision not to "reclaim him from his dark estate." (l. 574)

The consideration of Julian's response to the Maniac's speech must take into account the erasure of definite identities which the latter creates. Just as Maddalo was unable to pin down the reason for the Maniac's condition, the explanation for which cannot be found in the silent temporal intervals which organize Maddalo's tale:

> 'Alas, what drove him mad ?' 'I cannot say:
> A lady came with him from France, and when
> She left him and returned, he wandered then
> About yon lonely isles of desert sand
> Till he grew wild
> (ll. 245-9)

similarly, Julian's account of his ensuing actions is a non sequitur, as indicated by the punctuation, particularly the dashes:

> In friendships I had been most fortunate_
> Yet never saw I one who I would call
> More willingly my friend; and this was all
> Accomplished not; such dreams of baseless good
> Oft come and go in crowds or solitude
> And leave no trace _but what I now designed
> Made for long years impressions on my mind.
> The following morning, urged by my affairs,
> I left bright Venice.
> (ll. 575-83)

The generous gesture which Julian imagines and discards is presented as an impersonal gesture. It partakes of a crowd feeling which is reminiscent of the impersonal murmur, or

ceaseless speech, which is peopled by the different unidentified personae delineated by the Maniac's contradictory emotions, the "spirit's mate" (l. 337), the "mockery" (l. 385), or the "child" (l. 484). Changeability is also manifest in that there is no definite meaning which can be drawn from the ironical mirror effects which the poem builds between Julian and the Maniac. Julian would like his soul to be unenclosed, embracing everything within his experience, (29) and the Maniac's speech does confirm Julian's words that "much may be endured/ Of what degrades and crushes us", ll. 182-3), but it does so neither in the sense in which Julian meant them, nor in the way in which the Maniac's plight derides them, but rather, in the interplay of both. This change also affects the use and status of speech, as in the example of the term "pride". Wasserman's gloss on Julian's views is as follows: "only the impatience of pride leads to the madness of expecting the unregenerated world to correspond immediately to the mind's ideals." (30) Pride is a term which has been used earlier by Julian:

> We descanted, and I (for ever still
> Is it not wise to make the best of ill ?)
> Argued against despondency, but pride
> Made my companion take the darker side.
> (ll. 46-9)

It is also the reproach which the Maniac refuses, indignant at the misapprehension of which he is the victim, thereby inadvertently aggrandizing his uniqueness, and becoming the dupe of language:

> 'You say that I am proud _ that when I speak
> My lip is tortured with the wrongs which break
> The spirit it expresses... Never one

Humbled himself before, as I have done!
(11. 408-11)

It may be as a result of this vacillation that the adequacy of the same word is qualified in the Preface: "I say Maddalo is proud, because I can find no other word to express the concentered and impatient feelings which consume him." (31)

This casts a shadow of a doubt upon the appropriateness of Julian's characterization of Maddalo, and possibly foreshadows a loss of confidence in the meaning of words on the part of the author of the Preface. Words are not given a final meaning but always expectant of the next twist of meaning, as illustrated by the use of the term "friend", which applies each time with a different tinge to Maddalo (11. 20-1), Julian (11. 191-3), "the lady" (11. 525-7), the Maniac ("Yet never saw one whom I would call / More willingly my friend", 11.576-7), and finally to those to whom Julian presumably returns after leaving Venice ("But I had friends in London too" 1. 564). Rather than each occurrence casting doubt on the appropriateness of the term, the term is not exclusive, and carries the history of Julian's various friendships. Julian's narrative hangs in the balance which words create in calling for more words. In this case, can there be any question of betrayal, when the history is not finished?

The interpretations which see Julian's failure to "reclaim [the Maniac] from his dark estate" (1. 574) as a betrayal do not take into account the fact that Julian associates this "[dream] of baseless good" precisely with the powerlessness which the Maniac has endured, and is not available for action. For example, Kelvin

Everest has suggested that, in his failure to "articulate the Maniac in himself", Julian has betrayed the Maniac as well as his ideas. (32) Referring to the tradition of the sermo pedestris, (33) which Shelley subverts to his own purpose in this poem, Cronin states: " Whereas Pope and Swift can assert the heroism of the holding operation conducted by reason and by commonsense against the inner forces which threaten them, Shelley represents any such defence as a weak-minded retreat from the central springs of the human personality." (34) On the contrary, Julian's imagined project would be the epitome of the vain assimilation of the Maniac's ambiguity to a final meaning obtained by "study":

> But I imagined that if day by day
> I watched him, and but seldom went away,
> And studied all the beatings of his heart
> With zeal, as men study some stubborn art
> For their own good, and could by patience find
> An entrance to the caverns of his mind,
> I might reclaim him from his dark estate
> (ll. 568-74)

Not only would Julian presume that the Maniac's worklessness can be turned into the true work of sanity, but he would engage with a task which would itself be drawn into the inertia which it tries to bring to light ("day by day", "seldom went away", "all the beatings of his heart", "With zeal... by patience"). The naivete of imagining that this could be "accomplished" (l. 578) is the naivete of the belief that the Maniac's enigma could be penetrated from the world of light and sanity. It is also the naivete of these interpretations which assimilate this powerlessness into the world of action, and the belief that the work can be made as if it were a possibility. This belief partakes of the illusion that the true work can take place

directly in the world, which is formulated as follows by Blanchot:

> The need to write is linked to the approach toward this point at which nothing can be done with words. Hence the illusion that if one maintained contact with this point even as one came back from it to the world of possibility, "everything" could be done, "everything" could be said. (35)

In refraining from reclaiming the Maniac from his dark estate, Julian may be said to resist the absence of work which is called madness in the world of action. And yet, it is still through his faithfulness to the Maniac's powerlessness, i.e., to worklessness as a mode of "accomplishment", that, in the same absence of this gesture, Julian offers powerless inspiration a refuge or a reserve, where it can continue to act outside manifestation. To this extent, Julian's reserve would illustrate the Blanchotian writer's inevitably ambiguous decision to silence inspiration, in order to produce an inevitably ambiguous work:

> To write is to make oneself the echo of what cannot cease speaking _ and since it cannot, in order to become its echo I have, in a way, to silence it. I bring to this incessant speech the decisiveness, the authority of my own silence. I make *perceptible*, by my silent mediation, the uninterrupted affirmation, the giant murmuring upon which language opens and thus becomes image, becomes imaginary, becomes a speaking depth, an indistinct plenitude which is empty. This silence has its source in the effacement toward which the writer is drawn. Or else, it is the resource of his mastery. (36)

In this way, and at the risk of appearing to betray the Maniac to the eyes of "the cold world," (l. 617) Julian remains faithful to the mode of being to which the Maniac's speech testifies, a worklessness which cannot come directly into the world, but only through the poem. Julian's poem is still harkening to the Maniac,

and it illustrates Blanchot's statement that "the poet only speaks by listening." (37)

The Maniac's speech testifies to his continuous involvement with the "lady" who, given that she "came with him from France" (l. 246) may be identified with the spirit of revolution. In this case, this involvement manifests itself primarily as the expression of a want. The revolution cannot be apocalyptically accomplished, but persists as a want. Similarly, the pure exteriority of writing, ie, inspiration, cannot be written. (38) Works, and poems, would testify to both these felt lacks. The kind of community within which the Maniac is audible to Julian while not addressing him directly cannot take place otherwise than as the creation of, and in, the poem.

In this connection, Simon Critchley refers explicitly to the temptation to attach a notion of accomplishment to the energy of writing, which would mean seeing "writing as the enabling of revolutionary action, and revolution as the transformation of the epoch of the Book into the epoch of Writing". (39) As is clear enough, such a reading would be a complete misunderstanding of Blanchot's theory of the modern work of literature, as Critchley underlines: "Reading Blanchot apocalyptically would risk positing the achieved revolution as a Work, and construing post-revolutionary forms of community in terms of the very unity and totality that Blanchot's writing seeks to undermine." (40) On the contrary, the "absence of work that is the other name for madness", is, for Blanchot, the "pas encore" (not yet) which:

> does not refer back to an ideal speech, [but] rather constitutes, in its non-presence, the very decision of speech, this still to come that all speech that we hold to be present is and that is all the more insistent for designating and engaging with the future. (41)

Julian's decision to speak in turning away from his undisclosed community with the Maniac engages with the future by making the Maniac heard. *Julian and Maddalo*, considered as Julian's work, actually "depends on the work's undergoing... the ordeal which always ruins the work in advance and always restores in it the unending lack of work, the vain superabundance of inertia." (42) The work, no more than inertia or worklessness, each being the interruption of the other, provides no truth to rely on. One of the most ironical points of the poem may be found in the fact that "'The lady who had left him, came again... but after all / She left him', l. 599, ll. 605-6). While her return may be construed as having been induced by the Maniac's call, and as turning hallucination into reality, she remains true to her changeable, intermittent nature, in departing.

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When the anonymous publication of *Julian and Maddalo* in *The Examiner* proved impossible, Shelley suggested a separate volume, because Shelley saw the poem as incompatible with *Prometheus Unbound*. (43) In a letter dated 1820, Shelley wrote: "The Julian and Maddalo & the accompan[y]ing poems are all my saddest verses

raked up into one heap. - I mean to mingle more smiles with my tears in future." (44) If, as Felman underlines in her analysis of Foucault's *Histoire de la folie à l âge classique*, madness is "a lyrical explosion", that is to say, "the excess of its pathos,... precisely this capacity for suffering," (45) then, it is possible to suggest that *Julian and Maddalo* contains the unworkable pathos of *Prometheus Unbound*'s lyrical drama. In making *Julian and Maddalo* a poem which is a work of madness, that is, a work of the absence of work, Shelley also indicates that madness and the work are "word[s] perpetually at odds with [themselves]". (46)

CHAPTER FIVE

THE TRIUMPH OF LIFE (1822)

Shelley's *The Triumph of Life* (1822) presents a view of the human multitude which does not seem to offer the imagination the kind of expression of its forms which is the subject of *A Defence of Poetry*, written about a year earlier. In *A Defence of Poetry*, Shelley counters Thomas Love Peacock's dismissive view of the usefulness of poetry to the improvement of the world, by expounding the value of "the pleasure resulting from the manner in which [poets] express the influence of society and nature upon their own minds".(1) Shelley bases his defence of poetry on the fact that poetry consists of a vision of a society or community which is not otherwise visible to itself. The pleasure results from making it visible, independently of the content that is presented, and the beauty lies in the shape given to that which is otherwise shapeless. To make this vision visible is to mark "the before unapprehended relations of things," (2) and to "create afresh" associations the apprehension of which reiteration and familiarity muffle.

In *A Defence of Poetry*, familiarity has a disorganising and distorting role, compared to poetry which is " a mirror which makes beautiful that which is distorted" (3). It can be noticed from the outset that Shelley marks the transforming power of poetry by maintaining both the beautiful and the distorted in the

same sentence. If the shaping effect of poetry is to be visible, the beautiful cannot simply replace the distorted, at the risk of becoming, in turn, erased by familiarity. The shaping effect of poetry must also make distortion apparent, as a sign that this poetical transformation of the distorted into the beautiful does not become a complete transformation. In making distortion apparent, poetry is therefore as counterproductive as it is productive. It is both shaping and distorting. One of the objectives of this analysis of *The Triumph of Life* will be to assess the effects of poetry's counterproductive aspects, in particular through the overwhelming theme of distortion in the poem. It will also assess the extent to which the beautiful created by poetry in *A Defence* must be held, in *The Triumph of Life*, as a distortion symmetrical to that effected by familiarity, thereby confirming Shelley's argument in the earlier essay, that our human reality is poetical.

In *A Defence of Poetry*, Shelley has to invert the traditional motif of poets as expressing the 'spirit of the age' which acts as a pre-existing milieu to poetic creations, in order to accommodate the notion that these creations, in effect, make this 'spirit' apparent, and are not preceded by it. It is possible to see *The Triumph of Life* as a response to the *Defence*'s concern with the spiritual mode of being which poetry brings about, and which is, expectedly enough, not the mode of the factual (to "the story of particular facts", Poetry adds "a thousand unapprehended combinations of thoughts"). (4) Familiarity's disorganisation is only apparent through the disorganisation which poetry itself

enacts. Poetry reveals more of the reality that it is wanting, a notion which is turned into a positive intent in *A Defence of Poetry* ("Poetry enlarges the circumference of the imagination by replenishing it with thoughts of ever new delight, which have the power of attracting and assimilating to their own nature all other thoughts, and which *form new intervals and interstices whose void for ever craves fresh food*") (5). *The Triumph of Life* explores the modification which the destabilizing mode of being of poetry brings upon the life that was lived unwittingly, and draws perilous consequences from the imaginary power of poetry. (6)

To the disorganization of familiarity ("if no new poets should arise to create afresh the associations which have been disorganized") (7), poetry, according to the *Defence*, substitutes order whereby things appear as they never had before. Shelley insists that this is not any order, but order itself, hence his adoption of the saying attributed to Tasso that "None deserves the name of Creator except God and the Poet," (8) and his claim that poets "are the institutors of laws" (9). This implies that, before poetry, there is nothing identifiable, nothing visible. However, as suggested, *The Triumph of Life* explores the reality which poetry bequeaths, when it takes on a mode of being whose visibility arrests attention.

While poetry appears to restore things to an integrity to which familiarity did not let them claim (the main thesis of the *Defence*), this restored plenitude cannot settle as a mode of

being. The power of poetry is linked to its aversion towards becoming reified as a thing. (10) It is with this inherently traumatic disruption of shapeless nonexistence, the coming into existence and recognition of anything visible in the world both of objects and intellectual ideas, which *The Triumph of Life* also deals. As will be analysed, the poem offers a version of the reciprocal disruption and assault which reiteration, integration and familiarity on the one hand, and the breach of these under the form of dissent, on the other hand, bring upon each other. The striking aspect of *The Triumph of Life* is that the visions of which both the narrator and Rousseau are the recipients, are the occasions for their respective denunciations and expression of dissent. The kind of reality which vision bequeaths is entirely dependent on the visionary mode of being which is not meant to settle into a familiar reality that would bypass attention. (11) Vision is the way in which reality appears objectionable, in a similar way as it oppresses the Maniac's obsessive consciousness in *Julian and Maddalo*.

The Triumph of Life presents the reader with a vision of the narrator's vision. (12) It is clear that the distressing effect of the latter upon the narrator should not be confused with the intent of Shelley's *The Triumph of Life*. Although the poem obviously refers its reader to a tradition of allegorical representations of life, (13) the identification of the narrator's vision as a "vision of life" is made primarily through the pre-existing recognition of this tradition, as the narrator himself never identifies his vision in such terms. The marked

presence of this tradition, as a framework within which to identify the spectacle witnessed by the narrator, does not, however, lessen the disorienting effect of this spectacle. The narrator may, therefore, be said to be in the position of the witness to whom such shaping as poetry affords and as is passed on by tradition, according to *A Defence of Poetry*, ceases to act as a means of comprehension. His vision leaves the narrator almost speechless (ll. 177-9), and it is clear that this vision, however incomprehensible it was, could only be recounted because, in the course of the narrative, the narrator's voice has evolved nearly into that of the speaker, who brings the narrator's and Rousseau's voices together. In other words, *The Triumph of Life* presents the narrator's vision as a reconstruction.

Even if Rousseau's later testimony ("But a voice answered ... 'Life'" l.180), which, at the time the answer to the speaker's hardly uttered questions is given, is not even recognized as coming from "Rousseau" but from "an old root" (l.182), provides the name of "Life", it is unclear to which element of the vision this is supposed to be the answer: whether it is the vision of the crowd, or of the chariot, also called car, which follows the crowd, replicates its movement and passes over them, whether it is to the anguish which this distressing sight provokes in the narrator, or whether it is the fact that such a vision should have come to him at all. The poem, therefore, creates the sense that the name of "Life", and, possibly, all the words of this reconstructed vision, are powerless in making the vision more acceptable. Rousseau's message in *The Triumph of Life* does

"redeem[ing] from decay the visitations of the divinity in man", (14) but it does so by giving decay a new lease of life.

The Paradox of Life and Death.

The narrator's vision offers a reversed perspective, whereby life is deathly, that is to say, already and inevitably spreading the signs of death. The human multitude seems to be reduced to the mere movement of going by. As its procession is anticipated by the demise and disappearance of its members, it merely prolongs the process of disappearance as an experience to be lived through. The members of the crowd are drawn into the paradoxical death which Blanchot describes as "the perpetuity of that which admits neither beginning nor end." (15) With this picture of life conquered by, and persisting within, deathliness, the poem creates the nightmarish sense of what a death that is lived through would be like. Logically, life is called the conqueror, revealing the same passivity as that from which the Maniac suffers. Blanchot has encapsulated this deconstruction of life and death as follows in *The Writing of the Disaster*:

> where power does not reign - nor initiative, nor the cutting edge of a decision - there, dying is living. There dying is the passivity of life - of life escaped from itself and confounded with the disaster of a time without present which we endure by waiting, by

> awaiting a misfortune which is not still to come, but which has always already come upon us and which cannot be present.(16)

The members of the crowd are both not quite alive (as if they were yet to be truly born), and no longer alive. The "Janus-visaged Shadow" (1.94) may be connected to the paradox that the life which forces the members of the crowd to spend their lifetime in the absence of the possession of life, has conquered them. Conversely, this also affects the notion of death, which ceases to be final. The members of the crowd persist in an intermediary condition in which, in their striving, they merely postpone the force, whether this is viewed as life or death, that is coming towards them. The multitude represents the extent to which life must be suppressed in the process of spending it.

The disruption of the distinction between life and death is accompanied by the inability of the multitude to situate itself in relation to either, and this is reflected by the fact that the living are included in an illusion of which they do not seem to be aware, as is made clear in the depiction of the crowd's march towards its disappearance:

> And others as with steps towards the tomb
> Pored on the trodden worms that crawled beneath,
> And others mournfully within the gloom
>
> Of their own shadow walked, and called it death...
> And some fled from it as it were a ghost
> (ll. 56-60)

Whereas the first group seem only to mimic a progress towards the tomb, while apparently unaware of the ironical aspect of that which they "pored on", the second group mentioned appears to

mistake their shadow for death, thereby bringing the "gloom" in which they mourn upon themselves. These two symmetrical cases of illusion, lacking a criterion to decide between them, are reflected in the elusive and ghostly reality which the third group attempts to escape. The names "gloom", "death" and "ghost" will be neither confirmed nor disproved by the reality which they signify, as the latter does not pre-exist them. The inability of names to be proved or disproved by the reality to which they appear to refer indicates that "our human reality is in essence poetic, that this reality is itself the discourse by which it is laid bare." (17) The characterization of the chariot and its Shape in terms that are strongly suggestive of death (ll. 89-92) may, then, also be put into question. The narrator's vision casts doubt over the terms in which it is recounted, and the narrator may appear as the victim of the same inclusive illusion as he can see the members of the crowd be.

The moving crowd is a spectacle to recoil from, because it is the image of the waste which remains hidden in the task of living. After a fashion which can be traced back to the description of attentiveness in 'Difficulty of Analyzing the Human Mind', to live is a process whose violence is undergone, and in which individuals are no more noteworthy than attention consists in a sequence of particular thoughts. The description of the multitude is reminiscent of the mind that is refractory to reflection, and which, in its recalcitrance, repeats the violence which reflection operates in its containment of the mind's stream. The division of the crowd into its members ("Some... And others...

But more" ll. 55- 63) merely spreads the confusion and the fragmentation. The multitude does not reach the status of a whole. This is the spectacle of the unfamiliarity within familiar life. If the passage of the crowd represents its loss of the "apprehension of life", as mentioned in *On Life*, this is a loss which is never definitively experienced.

Decay has become a strange way of persisting. It is the replenishment of the life which familiarity is so successful in making familiar and unremarkable. In other words, the speaker suffers from being unable to overlook the waste in human undertakings which should have remained hidden, the strangeness which familiarity makes familiar. The vision is imposed upon the narrator as something he would rather not see. The inadequacy of human understanding (l. 103) to the movement of the chariot, and the failure to provide any kind of explanation in terms of chronology (l. 104), however, do not prevent the chariot from passing. On the contrary, the chariot represents this movement which no articulation can prevent or impede, just as none can account for it. Hence such an account as the narrator's will only reflect the powerlessness to account for it. No matter how critical the speaker's account of the multitude may be, he is unable to offer a perspective which may act as a counterbalance or remedy to "the desolation" (l. 160).

In seeing the torment which the multitude goes through, but, possibly, not as it is experienced by the multitude, the narrator may appear completely separate from the multitude. On the other

hand, the poem also highlights the narrator's inability to be separate from the crowd in any verifiable measure, since the distinction between his vision and the multitude's experience cannot be made. The narrator may be closer to the crowd than he himself may even take a view of, as only the speaker's overview, which brings the narrator and the crowd together, can allow such a view to be taken. *The Triumph of Life* draws the alienating consequences of the "ideal mimicry" whereby, according to *A Defence of Poetry*, "the sentiments of the auditors must have been refined and enlarged by a sympathy with such great and lovely impersonations, until from admiring they imitated, and from imitation they identified themselves with the object of their admiration." (18) The possibility to admire, imitate and identify oneself in the *Defence*, stems from the same oblivion or non-presence to oneself which makes the members of the crowd miraculously live on, in the absence of the apprehension of life. It is clear that in wishing that decay be disposed of more swiftly, and disappear from sight, the poet-narrator participates in the same impatience which makes the crowd overlook life in the movement of pursuing it. The multitude would then make his own impatience visible to the narrator.

Blindness and Insight.

1. Consciousness and retrospection.

The Triumph of Life suggests that the narrator's insight cannot be assessed against the blindness which is denounced both in the multitude and the various historical figures mentioned. According to Cronin, in rejecting life, and in allying himself with the stars rather than the sun, the visionary has doomed himself to see life as a pointless progress ruled over by a blindfolded god. (19) One of the points of the poem is precisely that life may appear pointless in this way, without, contrary to Cronin's implication, any alternative or choice being available once the vision comes to the speaker. This is borne out in Shelley's treatment of the narrator's voice at the beginning of the poem.

Sunrise is depicted independently, at least in appearance, of a consciousness to apprehend it, since it is only following "a strange trance" that the speaker is able to recognize "the freshness of that dawn" as that which has just been described. It takes "a strange trance" to bring the speaker back to his surroundings (11.35-39). It is only retrospectively that the speaker in the poem cannot be entirely associated with the daylight description of sunrise, where the light which appears is taken as the only light providing "all things" in their appearance, and in comparison with which the absence of appearance is held as a "mask." (1.3) It is also only retrospectively that the opening description of dawn is revealed as independent of a subject knowingly present to himself. Prior to this, the two seemed naturally merged, and the narrator's voice was pre-comprehended within the scene and unquestioned, like daylight. His voice could then be taken for the voice of

familiarity which goes unnoticed. With hindsight, this creates the sense of a scene that is seen without being looked at, as well as the sense of a continuous, dormant consciousness. The intervention of a speaker who has been brought back to his senses ("But I..." l. 21) separates him from a description to which he cannot even be said to participate since either his presence or his absence had been, until then, unnoticed. The main point is that the dormant consciousness prior to this awakening could not be differentiated from awakened consciousness, and this lack of distinction is not a mistake. Whereas the narrative sequence presents the narrator's awakening as posterior to the presentation of sunrise, it also suggests that dawn could be witnessed in the way it has, thanks to a kind of wakefulness which predates the narrative (hence the use of anterior past tense in l. 22). The passage is a presentation of consciousness that is never contemporary with itself. The break or awakening is only observable and re-marked through the change which it has already operated.

While retrospection appears to cast a shadow upon the unselfconscious freshness of sunrise, on the other hand, the subsequent identification leaves the unselfconscious and unquestioned evidence of dawn untouched, if not reinforced, as a recognised topos, since the description fits the recognition, and pushes any experience of pristine, unknown dawn further away from its apprehension. Yet, Shelley points at a paradox which cannot be resolved, for, although the freshness of dawn seems to have gone stale in becoming the object of recognition and

identification by the speaker (after all, this was already "dawn"), the unquestioned initial impression is not disproved by the subsequent identification: dawn's freshness can be reiterated. In this way, Shelley indicates that there is no original event or phenomenon which could make its name questionable: the freshness of dawn is sealed in its name. The result of this opening is to present the reader with the sense of a beginning which has to be revised each time, where neither the sunrise nor the intervention of the felt presence of the speaker can be given priority in time or in justification, hence the sense of a consciousness trying to reach to the point prior to that of which it is conscious, and finding itself already there. It is therefore the same thing to argue that there is an inherent sleepiness in consciousness's wakefulness, and that consciousness ever encounters all the novelty which it finds within itself.

This un-selfconscious description of dawn seems to be conveyed by the voice of undisturbed "reverie", described in 'On Life' as the state of those who "feel as if their nature was dissolved into the surrounding universe, or as if the surrounding universe were absorbed into their being. They are conscious of no distinction." (20) In this passage, Shelley notes the subject's difficulty to be present and contemporary to such a state: "these are states which precede or accompany or follow an unusually intense and vivid apprehension of life". The "apprehension of life" is as fleeting as that which, in attention, passes attention (see Chapter 3). Shelley suggests the extent to which

the voice of unquestioned and communally agreed metaphors, such as all the aspects which make dawn recognizable, resembles, and, possibly, inhabits, rather than inhibits, individual consciousness in its most unreflexive state. The "legislature created by the general representation of the past feelings of mankind" (21) mirrors consciousness's inherent sleep, a passivity which Blanchot detects in ecstatic experiences, when:

> consciousness allows itself to become filled with an anonymous plenitude. Thus the universal unity seems to be reconstituted. Thus, behind things, the soul of each thing obeys charms which the ecstatic [man] having abandoned himself to "the universe," now controls. (22)

In this way, Shelley suggests the extent to which the most spontaneous relation to the world may be imbued with cultural determinations.

Although the narrator has "kept...wakeful" over the night, "the mask / Of darkness" (ll. 3-4), he does not bring back any vision from this other realm into the realm of daylight. The narrator's nightly wakefulness does not provide any insight which may be of use into the realm of daylight, since, with daylight, his "thoughts ...must remain untold", just as his nightly experience appears to be enclosed in non-disclosure rather than unveiled by the comparison of it with "the stars that gem / The cone of night" (ll. 22-3), with its separation between day and night, of which night time is ignorant. The designation of night is already the result of retrospection, and of an awakening which cannot be undone. If awakening is irreversible, then, it also interrupts

any connection with that from which it is the awakening, hence the possibility to take it as the continuation of sleep. Nightly wakefulness is irretrievable as it is seamlessly transformed. The speaker's wakeful experience, no more than the light of the stars, can enter the realm of broad daylight, and daylight experience cannot revert to the night as something which would be accessible to it in the same terms. The stars do not make the night more like the day, on the contrary, the night is deeper for the stars. The unrelatedness of day and night reproduces the unrelatedness of the states of consciousness in daylight and at night-time. These are realms which appear to be closed to each other as there is no possibility of affirming that one has been left for the other. Similarly, as noted, the narrator's vision of the multitude constitutes no insight from outside this vision. Wakefulness cannot be opposed to sleep, since the latter is also a kind of wakefulness. There is therefore a continuity of wakefulness, which sunrise cannot witness, but of which it may be a part. (23)

The respective presentations of civilised nature and repulsive human multitude may be taken as encapsulating the tension within the argument around which Rousseau's reflexion on society and the State is traditionally seen to revolve. Rousseau's civilised understanding of nature which sustained his denunciation of civilisation as depravation, and his effort to conceptualize a society whose contractual basis would reproduce the model of the natural goodness of man, so long as it is embodied in the General Will (24) may be taken as the attempts to respond to, and

harness, the unfamiliar forces which he uncovered in his search for an elusive authenticity, which is necessarily resistant to assimilation and comprehension. (25) The notion that these are symmetrical views, echoing each other and leaving no possibility of choice between them, is conveyed by the fact that the "scene" mentioned (l. 31) may be understood as both the dawn which has just been described, and as the vision of the multitude which is about to be described. This is another effect of retrospection, since, in pursuing his retrospective tale to an anterior experience (and I knew / That I had felt" ll. 33-4), the speaker appears to tend towards the point where he started. The ensuing vision of the multitude may then be taken for another version of sunrise. (26) The trance over the poet-narrator's fancy leads to a modified vision of "the scene", where light acts as a revealing veil. As will be examined later on, this bears consequences on the motivation behind the choice of Rousseau as father figure of the historical awakening called the Enlightenment.

As a consequence of Shelley's exploration of the lack of distinction between continuity and discontinuity from night to day, or between blindness and insight in *The Triumph of Life*, it may be argued that his last poem draws the consequences from the notion that, as stated in 'On Life, "we live on, and in living we lose the apprehension of life." (27) The sense of such a loss as the multitude embodies may only be the continuation of the very life which has been lost. *The Triumph of Life* offers a portrait of life as lived in the "valley of perpetual dream" (l. 397), but the sense of dream-like experience does not lead to a

higher awakening, any more than, in Bowie's terms, the sense of what makes us aware of the work's inherent incompleteness can make it complete. (28)

The Waste of History.

This section will examine the conception of history following from living as the loss of the apprehension of life. In the narrator's denunciation of imperial power and its pageant, power and subjection mirror each other. The mirror effect between "the million" and "those who upon the free had bound a yoke" is repeated by the reversal in fate awaiting the latter since they are bound to suffer the subjection which they inflict (l. 116). The historical figures of power are singled out in such a way that they seem to take advantage of the multitude, while simultaneously resembling it in the pageant of history. On the other hand, the crowd ironically appears to celebrate the movement which crushes it, because this movement may also be held as hastening the end of its torment. It is unclear whether the crowd follows (l.136) the chariot or leads (l.139) it. Historical figures have to submit to the passage of history just as the members of the crowd bear the movement of life which they cannot encounter all at once. The multitude which the figures of power appear to subjugate reflects the submission of the latter to forces of want which their quest for power does not assuage. (29) On the other hand, the multitude's inability to apprehend life, and its ensuing subjection, partake of a decision and a

project of mastery over life which the historical figures of power epitomize. If the multitude represents the inertia defeating the masterful decisiveness of the mighty, conversely, it must be acknowledged that the torment to which they are subjected results from a decision to repel the approach of life in order to have the time to go through it. They all participate in captivity, an assessment which, at least in its ironical reversal of masters into slaves, echoes Rousseau's statement that "Man is born free [yet] everywhere he is chains. One thinks himself the master of others, and still remains a greater slave than they." (30) The movement of the multitude, in its recalcitrant and dissenting subjection to an unpalatable fate, would then reflect the same susceptibility to "the soul's secret springs" as is exhibited, in an amplified manner, by "the mighty captives". The multitude represents a movement which cannot be organized.

The irreversible process of destruction, which seems all that remains from the exertions of history, is expressed in Rousseau's judgment on the outcome of the Napoleonic episode:

> he sought to win
>
> "The world, and lost all it did contain
> Of greatness, in its hope destroyed; & more
> Of fame & peace than Virtue's self can gain
>
> "Without the opportunity which bore
> Him on its eagle's pinion to the peak
> (ll. 217-22)

Napoleon's fall is not merely a case of downfall from the peak. In the failed attempt to win the world, Napoleon not only

destroyed all that for which he attempted to win it, but he lost more than would have been gained, had he not made his attempt, as the very possibility for this attempt reflects on the base condition into which a world which could be the object of it was plunged. The passage designates the disastrous Napoleonic episode as the failed purge of the conditions which had made it possible in the first place. Napoleon is singled out as the epitome of the figure wreaking destruction. Yet his failure is not so much the reversal of the failed enterprise as it is its continuation. Its failure does not put the record straight again: there can be no reversal. The harm done cannot be compensated by the failure of the attempt, as history goes on without the possibility that it may be corrected. Napoleon and the other "anarchs" make the world old in continuing the mistakes which the course of history is unable to mend.

What the speaker and Rousseau appear to deprecate in the figures of history, is not so much that their actions are meant to harm, but that, as they move the course of history along, they bring about decay, which is also, paradoxically, what the speaker calls for when he pleads "Let them pass" (l. 243), as though in the hope of reaching the end of corruption, and a new dawn. In this call, the narrator reproduces the multitude's neglectful impatience. There appears to be nothing to be retained in history not so much in spite of, but because of its accumulating movement. The course of history is a continuing devastation, and history provides more of the material which it devastates. If Napoleon is seen as the victim of the same delusion as the

multitude, then, just as the latter's exertion is merely a way of giving way to life since it cannot experience it all at once, similarly, the dictator's conquest may be seen as the mere occasion for letting such attempts pass (1. 225). As in the case of individual existence, the statement from 'On Life' that "[O]ur whole life is thus an education of error" (31) is confirmed. History busies itself in the same way as the multitude goes about the task of living. What is thus condemned is the necessity for life and history to unfold as a process digressing from realization rather than leading to it. The destructiveness of the mighty has not erased them from the record of history, on the contrary, their appearance makes history awry. They are unforgotten, just as the multitude is obscene.

Rousseau's lamenting account gives more evidence of history's inability to be pinned down according to a particular direction towards either improvement or aggravation. Napoleon's descent was the crowning achievement and the epitome of his doomed enterprise. In this uninterrupted chain of events, it may be possible to consider that the Napoleonic venture and failure, continued to heal itself, and, equally, that it continued to make its harmful effect felt. It becomes equivalent to say that Napoleon brought disaster upon himself, and that he was powerless in repelling it, just as it is difficult to decide whether he triggered the forces necessary to topple him, or whether these successfully withstood his assault. Rousseau's account of history leads to a view which loosens the limits of historical events, blurs their separation, and consequently, their understanding in

causal terms. As its course cannot be sundered, present times do not seem to have even emerged from the past, as is implied by the narrator:

> and for despair
> I half disdained mine eyes' desire to fill
>
> With the spent vision of the times that were
> And scarce have ceased to be
> (ll. 232-4)

The present cannot ascertain that it has put the past behind, as the past reaches to the present. The irreparable aspect of actions in history is linked to their lack of a final meaning, and to the continuing influence of former times, as precedence does not produce the result that would explain and terminate it. Such influence is formalised in the poem in Rousseau speaking to the narrator over the years. But history does not provide the terms by which it could be understood. On the other hand, it may be argued that, behind the narrator's and Rousseau's denunciation of history as a distorted narrative, is a wish for history to be a true narrative, ie, a tale whose relating would be immanent to it.

It has been apparent in this analysis, that Rousseau cannot avoid anxieties which are attendant to his denunciation of history. Although the multitude may be held as the stagnant inertia with which Rousseau is impatient, because it absorbs and dooms attempts to arise from dreamlike continuity, it is also the mere agitation which is impervious to such forceful decisiveness as Napoleon tried to exert. The movement of the multitude represents the continuity whereby such ventures as Napoleon's come to pass.

In one aspect, Rousseau's condemnation may appear even more totalitarian than the usurpers whom he condemns. Napoleon fell victim to a curious lack of repression:

> "The Wise,
>
> "The great, the unforgotten: they who wore
> Mitres and helms and crowns, or wreathes of light,
> Signs of thought's empire over thought; their lore
>
> "Taught them not this_ to know themselves; their might
> Could not repress the mutiny within,
> And for the morn of truth they feigned, deep night
>
> "Caught them ere evening."
> (ll. 208-15)

The mutiny is to be understood as this force wreaking the destruction which, as described above, is all the more disastrous as it cannot even complete its destructive work but perseveres, and suspends the judgment of history on the sense of events as either improvement or regression. The paradox in Rousseau's condemnation lies in the fact that it is all the more difficult to divest the mighty of their power as this is no true power (ll. 288-92). Theirs is a power that is unable to break the circle of mutiny against, or within, mutiny (hence the mirror effect between the mighty and the multitude), and, in this distorting pretence, overshadows and obstructs the emergence of indisputable power. This is why, while Napoleon's domination is harmful, it is even more so in the measure within which it is lacking (l. 213), instead of this being its redeeming aspect.

As suggested, Rousseau's denunciation of history is underlaid by a wish that it were terminated, in a far more radical way than the destruction which the figures of power could perpetrate. If

the Napoleonic venture is liable to the depiction of the folly of the bid for power suggested in Blanchot's formula: "he who masters death (finite life) unleashes the infinitude of dying" 32) then, Rousseau's wish is to harness "dying" so that it never reappears as the dissent at the heart of life which makes it dissemble. Rousseau hints at a more sweeping mastery than Napoleon was able to show. This claim to mastery, however, is also the bid whereby power claims to be powerful ("the morn of truth they feigned"). The figure of Rousseau fits perfectly the lines of tension which form the basis of Clark's analysis of the connection between self-introspection and revolutionary creative power in Shelley. (33) These can be located in Rousseau's denunciation of the depravation of social man and illegitimate regimes, his attendant project to remake the structures of society which may be seen as a parallel to his project of a completely sincere self-delineation.

Rousseau blames the historical figures of power for having merely relied on the "[s]igns of thought's empire over thought", and for failing to fulfill and embody the meaning of the term "power" to which they claim (unleashing mutiny instead), an instance of fatal dissembling which he further develops with the examples of Plato, Socrates, Aristotle and Alexander (ll. 254-67). He also blames the figures of power for neglecting a kind of knowledge which it was the basis of their undertaking to claim to have secured (l. 214). Simon Haines's comments unravel the movement to which the figures of power fall victim: "Life is 'the Conqueror', so those who conquer most are those most conquered...

The captives are those whom life conquers by virtue of their own strength, over themselves and over the world. The stronger they are, the more completely they are subjugated by means of that part of themselves they have not overcome or known." (34) The striking point here is that the method to avert subjugation is already put in the terms which imply it: overcome and know. This points at the ambivalence of Rousseau's denunciation of history which cannot help resorting to the terms in which power itself claims to be powerful, and finds these terms to be worth no more than the measure in which they hold good.

On the other hand, the example of Bacon succeeding and superseding Aristotle offers the antithesis to the domination of knowledge that has been permanently secured. In this case, Rousseau praises, rather than deplores, the succession:

> "The other long outlived both woes and wars,
> Throned in new thoughts of men, and still had kept
> The jealous keys of truth's eternal doors
>
> "If Bacon's spirit [ ] had not leapt
> Like lightning out of darkness; he compelled
> The Proteus shape of Nature's as it slept
>
> "To wake and to unbar the caves that held
> The treasure of the secrets of its reign
> (ll. 266-73)

Rousseau designates the world view that has been superseded in terms which echo his scorn for the usurpers of power ("Throned", "jealous", "treasure" ,"reign"), thereby indicating that the world ruled by monarchy ("Throned") may become as obsolete as the world where things which are yet unknown, or a radically different world view, is unsuspected. Bacon's victory plunged

Aristotle's world into darkness, which is markedly different from enlightening it. Like lightning, Bacon brought in the light whereby he could be visible and evident. In other words, the figure of Bacon, sudden and devoid of any predecessor as it is, relieves Rousseau from the nightmare of history. That Rousseau sees Bacon in this light reflects on the concern defining Rousseau's times with an awakening which could be self-consciously transparent. Contrary to the implications of Rousseau's antagonistic scenario, however, this change of world leaves Aristotle and Bacon incommensurable. In his depiction of Bacon's success, Rousseau cannot avoid leaving some hint at the change to which the Baconian revolution is itself liable, for, if the "treasure" which it delivered consists in the "secrets" of Nature's reign, then, the reign comes to an end with the revelation of its secrets, but revealed secrets are no longer treasured. With Bacon, the forerunner of British empiricism, and a figure whom enlightened Rousseau was bound to admire, treasures were no longer held by nature. Bacon's emergence could be assimilated to a change in perception, an aspect which Shelley's association of Bacon with poets in both *A Philosophical View of Reform* and *A Defence of Poetry* underlines. (35) New ways of envisioning the world are like an extra sense provided together with that which it makes perceptible. In bringing about new possibilities which turned the change which it had effected into an accepted world view, the Baconian revolution became the disorganisation of the order in which it could be held as revolutionary. Revolution dissolves, and becomes imperceptible in its very success.

This changeableness is also perceptible in Rousseau's judgment on "the great bards of old" (l. 274), whose legacy, conveyed by the verbs "quelled" and "tempers" may be understood as both alleviating and intensifying "[T]he passions which they sung" and the "contagion" of "their living melody":

> See the great bards of old who inly quelled
> "The passions which they sung, as by their strain
> May well be known: their living melody
> Tempers its own contagion to the vein
> "Of those who are infected with it
> (ll. 274-8)

The ambivalence of these verbs reflects the ambiguity present in the understanding of the way in which intellectual phenomena take on shape, and bring about the condition of their acceptability to an audience or a community. While innovation may curb itself in order to be accommodated, it also defines the constraints with which it has to contend. According to the double meaning of "quell" (l. 274), the passions which are voiced and alleviated have been extinguished and crushed as disabling passions. The achievement of the poets of old consists in strengthening their melody so that it may also be alleviating. For Rousseau, the passions of the poets of old were strong enough to be allayed, and to overcome the weakness which would make them unruly and withheld, that is, unsung. The achievement of the poets of old

is to give passions the only form by which they can be known to exist.

The notion that the triumphant world view is in fact also the shape of which apparent opposition proved itself capable, just as, while being a mistake, the Napoleonic venture was still successful in arousing the forces that toppled the tyrant, is amenable to a notion of change and evolution as a continuity whereby there is no stopping what comes to be, since there is no pre-determined plan nor final meaning to it. "The great bards of old" embody the meeting between a spirit and a world which did not pre-exist this meeting. What comes into shape means that nothing can escape the shape of which it is capable. It is impossible to attribute the preceding poets a role either of moderation or intensification over a past which they have contributed to build.

Rousseau's position towards the elder poets is a case of modern contemplating classical, and his ability to contemplate this ideal makes it irrevocably inaccessible to him. As a modern writer, Rousseau feels typically endowed with the knowledge of his decadence. Rousseau contrasts his own position with the lack of knowledge for which he blames the figures of power, although he does so not in terms of knowledge, but of "his heart":

> "For in the battle Life and they did wage
> She remained conqueror - I was overcome
> By my own heart alone, which neither age
>
> "Nor tears nor infamy nor now the tomb
> Could temper to its object."
> (ll. 239-43)

This may imply that Rousseau cannot claim to have acquired the knowledge which the mighty captives did not, but to have suffered from this need for self-knowledge as an additional lack, which is also at the root of his enduring dissent towards history and its figures of power. Rousseau sees the multitude and the historical figures of power act out, as if naively and un-self-consciously, a lack of self-knowledge the awareness of which makes Rousseau participate in it more acutely. (36)

In his judgment on the outcome of Napoleon as the epitome of the disastrous historical figure of power, Rousseau suggests that the deposal of Napoleon was as disastrous as the usurpation, and failed to reverse the course of the mutiny let loose into the world. Napoleon's "mistake" was, then, to reveal more of something as a mutiny, which did trigger the forces to quench it, but made these forces themselves mutinous. Those who are in the greatest need of liberation are also least able to achieve it. In this respect, *The Triumph of Life* echoes the logic of Shelley's view of the French Revolution in the Preface to *The Revolt of Islam* (1818):

> If the Revolution had been in every respect prosperous, then misrule and superstition would lose half their claims to our abhorrence, as fetters which the captive can unlock with the slightest motion of his fingers, and which do not eat with poisonous rust into the soul. (37)

This is the logic whereby that which is felt to be most wanting is also the least attainable, as the want cannot bring its own provision. The dilemma in the figure of Rousseau is the closeness

to the disorder to which his denunciation of it brings him. Rousseau may be held as having pointed out the lack of the subject's mastery over himself, which men of action and figures of power let loose in the world through apparently quenching it. This parallels Napoleon's mistake in making mutiny apparent. In pointing out at an unmanageable force within the subject, Rousseau was bound to be targeted as a seditious spirit. His denunciation of subjection brought a heavier burden upon the man whom he saw in need of emancipation, by simultaneously revealing the want of the means to achieve it. Rousseau could then be seen as the epitome of the transmitter of forces of want, (38) while fighting against the forms of existence which made these forces, of which he was the mouthpiece, more urgent to address.

In this respect, the poem blurs the distinction between Rousseau and the figure which he has come to represent. Accounts of Rousseau's legacy rarely fail to bring his personality into play, so that he becomes a contentious figure who furnishes the terms of the contention which he arouses. Rousseau's statement, " I / Have suffered what I wrote" (l. 278-9), may be an allusion to his autobiographical work *The Confessions*, which, as Blanchot's essay in *Le Livre à venir* indicates, (39) may be held as the epitome of the dilemma arising from modern literary practice. For Blanchot, the inevitable inadequacy of the responses to which Rousseau is liable, lies in the dilemma to which Rousseau exposed himself in bidding for a kind of literary truth to be taken on its own grounds, and in the discovery that literature was powerless in substantiating this truth.

Rousseau is always open to being misunderstood, given that his work cannot be taken independently of a project which, if it could be realized, would preempt the work necessary to realize it. The treachery and delusion which Rousseau famously detects everywhere are already the despair to master the agitation derived from failing to recognise genuineness. Shelley uncovers the will for total power in Rousseau's myth of auto-affection in reverie. Rousseau's distrust of writing, as opposed to "self-affection" and the immediacy of speech, may repeat the mastery of disruption which the established order also claims to secure. However, as suggested, Rousseau cannot help scattering the forces for total power in the gesture of gathering them. In the multitude, Rousseau would face the dissolution of dissent, and, possibly, the dissolution or distortion to which dissent is led once it has "found [a] conductor," (40) and an image of the levelling into which his revolutionary dissent, in its success (that is, in its failure to gather its forces) would be distorted. Reverie muffles dissent, but it is also the quietness of dissent.

Rousseau's Narrative.

The narrative's tendency to unfold through a number of mirror effects which spin Rousseau's tale along, without reaching a final stability has been noted in John A. Hodgson's analysis of the sinister effect of the Shape all light's potion upon Rousseau

as confirming pre-existing attributes in the latter, and, more generally, in his interpretation of Rousseau's tale as death's symbolic reenactment of life. (41) A good example of this is Rousseau's supposed awakening. The uncertainty in locating Rousseau's birth or emergence into consciousness (whether in l. 311, or with "I arose" l. 335, or with the mention of "A Shape all light", l. 351) results in the sense that this is an event which has either been missed, because what is described appears to be the result of it, or expected in a way the description does not supply, while giving a semblance of it. As a result, oblivion is a state from which the narrator of the tale is never sure that he has emerged. This is symmetrical to the narrator's earlier inability to overtake and witness his coming into consciousness.

It is apparent that Rousseau's narrative endows the events which it relates with an indecisiveness which the narrative produces in the process of pinning it down. This follows from the fact that anteriority is a word that can be used only after the event, and is an effect of the imaginary re-organisation of the narrative. The narrative is never at the point where it purports to be, because it has nothing by which to situate itself: it is always "now" (l. 337), the passing mention of which gives the narrative a semblance of chronological coherence, without an outside time-scale. While it has been noted that, in Rousseau's tale, events occur unmotivated, (42) yet, precisely through these mirror effects, there is no sense of total randomness, as the tale spins its own pseudo- or quasi-order.

If the sequence in chronology and causality is disrupted, it becomes possible to suggest that the disappearance of the Shape all light does not ensue from its deterioration, which would be provoked by any mistake on the part of Rousseau. (43) The attribution of agency, cause or effect is made uncertain, if it is agreed that Rousseau's supposed inability to sustain the vision is translated by the fact that it is, precisely, his gazing on the shape's dancing feet that disintegrates the vision, or, at least, enables him to witness its disintegration (ll. 383-5). (44) The waning of the Shape corresponds to a violence which Rousseau's thoughts (l. 384), "mind" (l. 386), and "brain" (l 405) sustain and simultaneously witness, however radical the damage may be (l. 405). This pattern echoes Rousseau's and the narrator's suffering from their vision of the multitude. As in the case of the Maniac in *Julian and Maddalo*, this is suffering from the ability to remain separate from suffering. Change such as the waning of the Shape all light already signals the mind's change into the ability to witness it. Change is, then, every time a trance, or a lack of discontinuity in consciousness, such as the one the narrator experiences at the beginning of the poem.

The same reasons which make the moment of change missed and overlooked also make it open-ended, so that Rousseau's version of events can be undone back to its beginning. What prevents the judgment on the deterioration of the Shape is that, according to Rousseau, its waning does not revive the thoughts it had trampled, as a counteraction to their extinction. As in the case of history, change is irreversible. The poem forestalls the

definitive version of such deterioration, since, if Rousseau's response to the challenging appearance of the Shape is imperfect, then his recounting of the event may itself be tainted, and a continuation of his mistake. The main paradox in Rousseau's narrative is that this is the recounting of an amnesiac episode, the recounting of which revives its "visitation," (45) and reiterates its passage as one more opportunity to let it go by.

If the Shape all light induces the forgetfulness which finally causes her disappearance, then, it is possible to trace this disappearing process back to the Shape's initial appearance. The Shape's disappearance may not be deemed as a decline from its apparition, since her disappearance into oblivion mirrors her emergence in some degree. The "ceaseless song" (l. 375) to which her feet move, and which appears to induce the disastrous trampling, recalls the earlier occurrence when

> all the place
> "Was filled with many sounds woven into one
> Oblivious melody, confusing sense
> Amid the gliding waves and shadows dun;
> (ll. 339-42)

The scene has been aptly compared with archetypal Rousseauan scenes of auto-affection from the *Rêveries*, in which the subject's sense of self-distinction merges with, and dissolves into objects of perception. (46) The increasingly violent trampling of thoughts by the Shape (ll.382-8), however contrasting with the hypnotic effect of flowing water it may be, is the return to oblivion of thoughts which, in their earlier non-distinction, made oblivion imperceptible. As a result, the

disappearance of the Shape means its continuing persistence for Rousseau (ll. 424-5). The later transformation of the Shape makes its earlier appearance waver under the effect of a reiterated revision, so that ulterior events are also awaiting transformation. Blanchot has encapsulated the shuttle movement between anteriority and posteriority as follows: "between being and not-being, something which never yet takes place happens nonetheless, as having long since already happened." 47). As will be analysed, this is the backward progress of the waves to which thoughts, which make oblivion appear, are likened later in the poem (ll. 406-10).

According to de Man, in the earlier scene, oblivion emanates from rhythm which articulates randomness. Yet, contrary to de Man's suggestion, this is not necessarily a case of "the distortion which allows one to make the random regular by 'forgetting' the differences". (48) In this episode, rhythm is not perceived at the expense of the differences in randomness, but, on the contrary, randomness generates its own rhythm by filling up the interval between the potentially disruptive beats of regularity. Randomness is a rhythm of its own, which no longer awaits the second beat of regularity. To this extent, the absence of the latter, and the absence of termination, are equivalent to the discontinuation of the Shape's dance, which may be seen as a return to randomness which is a rhythm or measure of its own, under the same scattering and numbing effect. Rousseau's dilemma is that in enjoying the naive obliteration of distinction in reverie, he is adequate to the same fluctuation with the sight

of which the multitude presents him. The shape all light defuses the powers of the mind, and turns them into a deeper resilience, in the same way as the rivulet turns a random rhythm into a melody for those who hear without listening (ll.340-1).

The Shape's task is erasing to the extent that it reminds Rousseau that he 'has' "thoughts" which are erased, these thoughts being mentioned only as they are scattered (ll. 382-390). The trampling of Rousseau's thoughts may not, then, be considered as a weakening of his mind in the sense that his mind was previously more potent. It was only so potent as its scattering is able to reveal. Thoughts make an erasing effect appear, an effect which determines the subject's sense of self, rather than the other way round, as the syntax indicates ("The thoughts *of him*", l. 384, emphasis added). The Shape makes the events of the mind perceptible in their disappearance, and this loss is an addition, in the same way as the multitude makes decay persist. The Shape darkens thoughts so as to make them visible like stars in the night sky.

Following the Shape's erasing effect, the next lines may be considered as a third occurrence, or "wave", of oblivion, adding its erasure over the previous ones:

> And suddenly my brain became as sand
>
> "Where the first wave had more than half erased
> The track of deer on desert Labrador,
> Whilst the fierce wolf from which they fled amazed
>
> "Leaves his stamp visibly upon the shore
> Until the second bursts
> (ll. 405-11)

In this passage, Shelley uses the familiar motif of escape and pursuit as a model for the workings of the mind. The metaphor of trampling and treading is continued from the previous passage with the images of the track and the stamp. This time, the elusive and ulterior nature of the mind is conveyed through the fact that the mind, symbolised by the pursuit of deer by wolf, is already engaged in a task that could eliminate all track in a far more radical way than the waves can, if it could be completed, i.e., if wolf could catch up with deer. In partially erasing the deer's track, the waves reproduce this process in its incompletion and its perpetuation. The erasing process is not, therefore, linked to an inability to retain events on the mind's part, but to the fact that, by the time these are events for the mind, the mind has already missed its reverie-like imperviousness to them.

As suggested, the unwitnessed emergence of the mind's events may be considered as violent as their erasure. De Man has compared this violence to the combined violence whereby language both enforces its positional power and covers the fact that it cannot posit meaning, (49) but presents itself as naturally given, hence its arbitrary and inexorable nature. (50) Language involves "the forgetting of the events this language in fact performed," just as, in order to maintain itself, thought "forgets what it thinks", and must forget that it forgets it, which is, according to de Man, "the element in thought that destroys thought in its attempt to forget its duplicity". (51) This aptly describes the extent to which, in Shelley's view, and as analysed in Chapter

3, thought prevents itself from thinking totally, but remains distinct, and withdrawn from what it thinks. Similarly, the pretence whereby language appears naturally given derives from the fact that words cannot be mistaken for things (see Chapter 2). However, "what" thought thinks is itself a function of thought, and in calling the act of thought violent and the power of language senseless, de Man uses names which are already derived from the advent of language. The violence is not initial, (52) or, rather, what is initial is not violence, which is already the name that language gives it.

CONCLUSION

It is apparent from the final sections of Chapter Five that Rousseau's narrative enacts the disturbance which Rousseau himself has made visible. As suggested, this is a paradoxical narrative which is never overtaken by the erasing process which it recounts, so that the narrative itself acts as erasure, even as it returns to the occurrence of erasure. If, because of the inclusion of the event that can undermine it, Rousseau's narrative can be held as an entire reconstruction, then, even the erasure of his brain is part of this reconstruction, and appears only as a function of the narrative. It is possible to understand that Rousseau in *The Triumph of Life* becomes "Rousseau", the persona for whom the passage of the multitude, the 'Shape all light', and its erasure, are events within the narrative's organization. (1) Rousseau has become the creature of the narrative of his life. The "old root which grew /To strange distortion," (ll. 182-3) which anticipates the narrator's half-uttered questions, may then be the historical Rousseau, a historically transmissible and mute object, and, nevertheless, the vehicle for the persona who has taken on a narrative existence, and is able to bequeath "what [Rousseau] wrote" as a reality to the narrator.

This may be one way of understanding the fact that Rousseau exposed himself to the flux (ll. 460-8), i.e., to the tale which the life whose every moment is instantly imaginary, becomes.

Conversely, when Rousseau joins the multitude, he may be said to merge with the world of his vision, that is, into the depths from which he can speak again to the narrator. That the narrator has a vision which recalls Rousseau, means that Rousseau may have never ceased speaking to the narrator, included as he is in the vision which he made available to the narrator. The implications of this reach back to one of the main arguments of *A Defence of Poetry*. The narrator's vision and his visible world are the shapes of "that great poem, which all poets, like the co-operating thoughts of one great mind, have built up since the beginning of the world". (2)

The Triumph of Life confirms Shelley's main thesis in *A Defence of Poetry* that "our human reality is poetical," (3) which may be considered as the most forceful endorsement of poetry's accomplishment, since it is brought to the level of human reality as a whole. But the poem also confirms the aspect which, as Blanchot makes clear, is attendant to this certainty, i.e., that, "it is the discourse by which it is laid bare." According to this part of Blanchot's argument, the reasons which justify the human enterprise, including its manifestation as a work of poetry, also lay the latter open to the threat of annihilation, in a movement which evokes a reality which is no longer humane. This study has focused on the presence, in three poems by Shelley, of an awareness of this poetical movement, which is sometimes asociated with the reconstitution of the unity from which man has been alienated, and sometimes with an inertia which is prior to the consciousness which can be taken of it. This tension encapsulates

the understanding of the work of literature as simultaneously making and unmaking itself, which is central to Maurice Blanchot's notion of modern literature.

The danger and the attraction of this poetical movement have accounted for those instances where, as in *Alastor*, the poet is, for Shelley, a poet who has not spoken poetically yet, and where, by contrast, as in *Julian and Maddalo*, a poetical work emerges from the speechlessness within which it is confined. This ability, in terms of Blanchot, of the poetical work to put itself at risk, and, simultaneously, to find its salvation in its near annihilation, sheds light on the extreme oscillations which characterize Shelley's works. The works which have been selected for this study may be considered as the less openly lyrical in the Shelleyan corpus, as compared, for example, to *Prometheus Unbound* (1820). However, even *The Triumph of Life* testifies to the strength of Shelley's engagement with the future, even as he contemplates "the human reality." In this respect, the lack of a final meaning, whereby any work of literature may be said to be "merely a work," (4) is also the chance of history.

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

1. Donald Reiman and Sharon Powers, Shelley's Poetry and Prose, (1977), 491.

2. Ibid., 503.

3. In the case of Shelley, such epiphany is "already viewed with the scepticism that attends its being located in a state halfway to experience and yet close to innocence." Tillotama Rajan, Dark Interpreter. The Discourse of Romanticism (1980), 63.

4. Paul Dawson, The Unacknowledged Legislator. Shelley and Politics (1980), 3-5.

5. Hugh Roberts, Shelley and the Chaos of History (1997), 29.

6. This is the main thesis of Jerome McGann, The Romantic Ideology (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1983).

7. Hartman, 1970, in Cynthia Chase, Romanticism (1993), 49.

8. see for instance Paul de Man's treatment of the Winander Boy poem from Wordsworth's *Prelude*, in Cynthia Chase, op. cit., 55-78, as well as his reading of Shelley's *The Triumph of Life*, discussed in the last Chapter of this study.

9. Chase (1993), 13.

10. Leslie Hill, Blanchot. Extreme Contemporary (1997), 2. Timothy Clark, Derrida, Heidegger, Blanchot. Sources of Derrida's Notion and Practice of Literature (1992), 65-7.

11. Gerald Bruns, Maurice Blanchot, The Refusal of Philosophy (1997), 83.

12. Maurice Blanchot, The Space of Literature (1982), 215; L'Espace littéraire (1955), 285. These works will be later referred to as SL and EL.

13. Maurice Blanchot, L'Entretien infini (1969) 503, and The Infinite Conversation (1993), 342. These works will be henceforth referred to as EI and IC.

14. Maurice Blanchot, La Part du feu (1949), 110.

15. EL, 266, SL, 200.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

1. EI, 515-28. IC, 351-60.

2. Andrew Bowie, Aesthetics and Subjectivity (1990), 2-3.

3. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe et Jean-Luc Nancy, L'Absolu littéraire (1978), 421-33. See also Simon Critchley, Very Little... Almost Nothing. Death, Philosophy, Literature (1997) 85-117.
Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester also provide a concise account of the philosophical issues to which the German romantic notion of literature was a response in the Introduction of their translation of L'Absolu littéraire, Literary Absolute, The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism (State University of New York Press, 1988).
Jean-Pierre Mileur discusses Lacoue-Labarthe's as well as Barnard and Lester's scenario of Romanticism as a critique of the literary absolute coming out of a constrainingly German philosophical framework. Mileur points out that the same debate also emerged among the English romantic poets, around the issue of the project of the imagination which the 2nd generation of the English romantics reproached the first generation with abandoning. Mileur argues that the limiting theoretical terms of Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy's understanding of Romanticism blind them to the solutions which English Romanticism offers in practical rather than theoretical terms, thereby leaving the possibility of a heuristic rather than ideological role for the romantic. Jean-Pierre Mileur, 'The Return of the Romantic', in Tillotama Rajan and D.L. Clark, Intersections. Nineteenth Century Philosophy and Contemporary Theory (State University of New York Press, 1995), 326-46.

4. op. cit. 80.

5. EI, 517 ; IC, 353.

6. Andrew Bowie, From Romanticism to Critical Theory (1997), 31.

7. Bowie (1990), 20.

8. Jonathan Glover, The Philosophy and Psychology of Personal Identity (1988), 8.

9. Critique of Pure Reason, B 56 in Glover, (1988), 27.

10. Vincent Descombes, in Eduardo Cadava, Who comes after the Subject? (1991), 159.

11. Bowie (1990), 20, 59.

12. Robert C. Solomon, Continental Philosophy since 1750 (1988), 42-3.

13. Azade Seyhan, Representation and its Discontents (1992), 26.

14. Bowie (1990), 24.

15. Bowie (1997), 50.

16. Richard Kearney, The Wake of Imagination (1988), 176.

17. Bowie (1990), 32.

18. Gilles Deleuze, Kant's Critical Philosophy (1984), xi-ii.

19. Bowie (1990), 50.

20. Critique of Judgment B 194 in Bowie (1990), 30.

21. Bowie (1990), 102.

22. Bowie (1990), 105-6.

23. Daniel Breazeale, 'Fichte and Schelling: The Jena Period', in Robert C. Solomon and Kathleen M.Higgins eds., The Age of German Idealism (1993), 138-81, 165.

24. Paul Hamilton, Coleridge's Poetics (1983), 54.

25. Seyhan (1992), 18.

26. A parallel can be drawn between Novalis's declaration that "The true poet is all-knowing he is a real world in miniature" (Logological fragment no 46, Philosophical Writings (1997), 80 and the view expressed by Mallarmé in the following passage from a 1884 note, which Henri Peyre suggestively compares with the spirit in which Shelley wrote his *Defence of Poetry*:

> La Poesie est l'expression, par le langage humain ramene a son rythme essentiel, du sens mysterieux des aspects de l'existence: elle doue ainsi d'authenticite notre sejour et constitue la seule tache spirituelle.
>
> Poetry is the expression by the human language restored to its essential rhythm, of the mysterious meaning of the aspects of existence: thus it gives authenticity to our sojourn and represents the only spiritual task.
> (Note to Léo d'Orfer, 27 June 1884)

in Henri Peyre, Qu'est-ce que le symbolisme? (1974), 115.

27. System of Transcendental Idealism (1800), trans. Peter Heath. (Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1978), 232, in Hugh Roberts (1997), 62.

28. Vincent Descombes, in Cadava (1991), 132.

29. Sychrava refers here to Claud Sutton, The German Tradition in Philosophy (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974), 49. Juliet Sychrava, Schiller to Derrida (1989), 165.

30. Breazeale (1993), 168.

31. Mark Kipperman, Beyond Enchantment. German Idealism and English Romantic Poetry (1986), 86-7.

32. Kipperman (1986), 12.

33. Kathleen Wheeler, German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism (1984), 15.

34. Maurice Blanchot, 'Literature and the Right to Death', The Gaze of Orpheus and Other Literary Essays, ed. P. Adams Sitney (1981), 47.

35. This is the focus of L'Absolu littéraire, where it is argued that the German romantic concern with the notion of the work as self-reflexive or "auto-production", and offering itself in and as its own shaping, is revealing of the romantic awareness that literature never reaches a state of sameness. The question which has been asked at the end of this section, in terms of psychological and transcendental subjects has obviously already been answered by Walter Benjamin, in his *Concept of Criticism in German Romanticism,* to which Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy refer repeatedly. As Samuel Weber explains, in contrast with Fichte, the romantics do not relate reflection to the I, but to the progress toward "a more pervasive organization" within the medium of art. In other words, art unfolds as the individual artwork and as criticism. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy's insistence on the shaping of the shape is a kind of intensive version of Benjamin's notion that in the form of the individual work, this reflection limits itself. Samuel Weber, "Criticism Underway: Walter Benjamin's Romantic Concept of Criticism", Kenneth R. Johnston ed., Romantic Revolutions (1990), 302-20.

36. For helpful accounts of these issues see Timothy Clark, The Theory of Inspiration (1997), 117-20, and Critchley (1997), 87-8.

37. Friedrich Schlegel, Critical Fragment no 37, Lucinde and the Fragments (1971), 146.

38. Critical Fragment no 55, Schlegel (1971), 149.

39. Novalis,'Miscellaneous Writings' no 91, in Wheeler (1984), 92.

40. Friedrich Schlegel, 'Ideas', no 45, in Wheeler (1984), 56.

41. Critical Fragment no 78, Schlegel (1971), 152.

42. Novalis, 'Logological Fragments I', no 60, in Philosophical Writings (1997), 60. Quoted in Blanchot, EI, 522 ; IC, 356.

43. Here again, Mallarmé is helpful in providing a formulation for this conversion of consciousness into a higher level, as being a "pleine conscience arrivée à un point tel de tension et de clairvoyance qu'elle embrassera la totalité de l'espace et du

temps. Car en cette apparition fragile, en ce moi impersonnel, l'univers spirituel se reflètera comme en un microcosme et retrouvera son identité." (a full consciousness brought to such a level of tension and awareness that it will encompass the totality of space and time. For, within this fleeting vision, within this impersonal self, the spiritual world will be reflected within a microcosm, and will find its identity again) (Letter to Cazalis, 5 August 1867). Peyre (1974), 71.

44. EI, 521-2: IC, 355.

45. Wheeler (1984), 47.

46. Sychrava (1989), 51.

47. Seyhan (1992), 37.

48. Seyhan (1992), 47.

49. See Alice A. Kuzniar's useful article on the other, expansive side to Jena Romanticism's theory of self-referential poetry and literature as the production of its own theory. She insists on the "liberating consequences of the irreparably divisive act of reflection", without identifying the negative momentum in Romantic reflection with self-assertiveness. Kuzniar, Alice A., 'Reassessing Romantic Reflexivity. The Case of Novalis.' The Germanic Review, 63 (1988), 77-86, 81.

50. According to Walter Benjamin, Schlegel's definition of romantic poetry in Fragment 116 has nothing to do with the notion of a temporal progress. Instead, it has to be understood synchronically, and it refers to the essentially unfinished process by which the task of universal poetry becomes more accurately unfolded in the individual work. See Weber, in Johnston (1990), 312.

51. Lacoue Labarthe and Nancy (1978), 4.

52. EI, 520; IC, 354-5.

53. Leslie Hill notes: "The bizarre result is a writing in which everything already seems to possess somewhere in the novel its own explicit or implicit interpretation." Hill (1997), 65.

54. EI, 572; IC, 391.

55. Clark notes: [Blanchot's fragments] "generate themselves out of the attempt to let speak a lack whose insistence intensifies in proportion to the writing that might seem to complement or fill it", Clark, Timothy, 'Modern Transformations of German Romanticism: Blanchot and Derrida on the Fragment, the Aphorism and the Architectural' Paragraph, 15 (1992), 232-47, 237.

56. EI, 522-3; IC, 356.

57. Critchley stresses the complete renovation which the romantic artwork as a new mythology was meant to be:"The romantic literary absolute would be the great novel of the modern world, a total book that would be the peer of Dante, Shakespeare and Cervantes and the superior of Goethe." Critchley (1997), 94.

58. Critchley (1997), 525.

59. Maurice Blanchot, La Part du feu (1949), 110.

60. Bowie (1997), 55.

61. Clark (1992), 235.

62. Critchley (1997), 106.

63. For Benjamin, "formal irony", which he distinguishes from the irony which is identified with the freedom of the subject, is "an objective moment in the work itself", and renders it indestructible through the "paradoxical attempt to continue building a structure even through demolition." This persistence in the midst of contradiction can be set in parallel with the present argument concerning the fragment. See Johnston, (1990), 314.

64.'Athenaeum Fragments', no 54, Schlegel (1971), 167.

65. 'Athenaeum Fragments' no 206, Schlegel (1971), 189.

66. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy (1978), 46.

67. ibid., 69.

68. EI, 518; IC, 353.

69. 'Athenaeum Fragments' no 77, Schlegel (1971), 170.

70. Critchley (1997), 110.

71. 'Miscellaneous Observations' no 104, Novalis (1997), 42.

72. Maurice Blanchot, L'Ecriture du désastre (1980), 98; The Writing of the Disaster, trans. Ann Smock (1986), 60. These works will be later referred to as ED and WD.

73. ED, 98-9; WD, 60.

74. EI, 518; IC, 353. Blanchot comments on this further: "Fragmentary speech does not know self-sufficiency; it does not suffice, does not speak in view of itself, does not have its content as its meaning. But neither does it combine with other fragments to form a more complete thought, a general knowledge. The fragmentary does not precede the whole, but says itself *outside* the whole, and after it." EI, 229; IC, 152.

75. SL, 46; EL,48 .

NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

1. See Bowie, 1990 and 1997.

2. Bowie (1997), 16.

3. EI, 518; IC, 353.

4. One of the main sources to this aspect of German thought at the time for Schelley was Coleridge. See Roberts (1997) 80-104. Shelley's dismissive reference to Kant's work in *Peter Bell the Third* (11. 518-32), and his indictment of him amongst "Chained hoary anarchs, demagogue and sage" in *The Triumph of Life* (11. 236-7), do not prevent us from seeing the relevance of certain parallels between Kant's thought and Shelley's.

5. Kenneth Neill Cameron (1951) examines the role of Godwin and of the doctrine of Necessity on Shelley's radicalism. Dawson (1980) provides a useful understanding of the connection between Shelley's notion of the imagination, originally developed as part of his moral philosophy, and his radical politics. C.E Pulos (1951) and Hoagwood (1988) focus on the importance of scepticism in Shelley.

6. Kenneth Neill Cameron, Shelley. The Golden Years (1974) note 6, 599.

7. David Lee Clark, Shelley's Prose; or, The Trumpet of a Prophecy (1974), 181.

8. Cameron (1974), note 1, 598.

9. Dawson (1980), 216.

10. Timothy Clark, Embodying Revolution. The Figure of the Poet in Shelley (1989), 21-2.

11. Percy Bysshe Shelley, The Complete Works (1965) VII, 59. The Julian edition will be later referred to as "Julian".

12. The statement from 'On Life' that "nothing exists but as it is perceived" could lead to a mistaken parallel with Berkeley's immaterialist doctrine. Reiman and Powers (1977), 476.

13. Julian, VII, 59.

14. André Lalande, Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France (12e ed., 1976), 281.

15. John Yolton, Locke and the Way of Ideas (1993), 26

16. Ernst Cassirer, The Philosophy of the Enlightenement (1951), 123.

17. Cassirer (1951), 93.

18. Julian, VII, 62.

19. R.G. Collingwood, The Principles of Art (1963), 175.

20. John Yolton, Thinking Matter. Materialism in 18th Century Britain (1983), 114.

21. Ernest Lee Tuveson, The Imagination as a Means of Grace (1960), 2.

22. Julian, VII, 63.

23. On these issues, see Cronin, Richard, 'Shelley's Language of Dissent' Essays in Criticism, 27 (1977), 203-15.

24. According to Jonathan Bennett, because of the empiricist assimilation between an idea as a concept and as a mental state, and by means of their notion of an incontrovertible intuition, the empiricists claimed that the account of our inner state resulting from self-introspection was no more liable to be mistaken than the intuition of a logical truth. Michaud, Yves, 'L'empirisme revisité', Critique, 331-2 (1975), 25-54, 32.

25. On Shelley's acquaintance with the *Encyclopédie*, and on his position towards the project of a system of knowledge which it propounds, see Roberts (1997) 86-8.

26. Julian, VII, 59.

27. Cited in Cassirer (1951), 56.

28. Julian, VII, 59.

29. Franz Gabriel Nauen, Revolution, Idealism and Freedom: Schelling, Holderlin and Hegel and the Crisis of Early German Idealism (1971), 34-5.

30. Julian, VII, 61.

31. Joseph Esposito, Schelling's Idealism and Philosophy of Nature (1977), 53.

32. Nauen (1971), 35.

33. ibid., 38.

34. Paul Dawson refers to "Shelley's phenomenalist 'intellectual philosophy'" Dawson (1980), 227.

35. 'Logological Fragments' (II) no 27, Novalis (1997), 76.

36. David Simpson, Romanticism, Nationalism and the Revolt against Theory, (1993), 20, 51.

37. Simpson (1993), 44-5.

38. Clark (1989), 32-3.

39. Simpson (1993), 49.

40. Thomas Reid, 'Essays on the Active Powers of Man' (1788), cited in Clark (1989), 33.

41. Julian, VII, 62-3.

42. Cited in Cassirer (1951), 116.

43. Bowie (1997), 40.

44. Bowie (1993), 38.

45. Yolton (1956), 74.

46. Gilles Deleuze, Empirisme et subjectivité (1953), 15. My translation.

47. John Yolton, Locke and French Materialism (1991), 198.

48. Ibid.

49. Cited in John Yolton, Perceptual Acquaintance from Descartes to Reid (1984), 12.

50. Yolton (1956), 68.

51. Notes on *Queen Mab*, Shelley: Poetical Works, Thomas Hutchinson ed. (1970), 810.

52. William Godwin,Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and Its Influence on Morals and Happiness (1946), 18.

53. Bowie (1997), note 25, 306.

54. Yolton (1983), 124.

55. Julian, VI, 176.

56. Julian, VII, 61.

57. David Simpson, German Aesthetics and Literary Criticism, (1984), 7.

58. Julian, VII, 61.

59. Julian, VII, 342. H. Buxton Forman observed that this sentence "does not seem to have any necessary connexion with the others". However, this passage does not seem unconnected with the ideas exposed in the Section entitled 'The Mind'. 'On Life' also ends with this sentence.

60. Reiman and Powers (1977), 505.

61. Terence Allan Hoagwood, Scepticism and Ideology. Shelley's Political Prose and Its Context from Bacon to Marx (1988), 63.

62. Reiman and Powers (1977), 477-8.

63. Hoagwood (1988), 24.

64. Julian, VII, 63.

65. 'On Life', Reiman and Powers (1977), 478.

66. Ibid.

67. Hoagwood (1988), 25.

68. Roberts (1997), 130-4.

69. "Let us contemplate facts. Let me repeat that in the great study of ourselves we ought resolutely to compel the mind to a rigid examination of itself. Let us in the science which regards those laws by which the mind acts, as well as in those which regard the laws by which it is acted upon, severely collect those facts." Julian, VII, 62.

70. Roberts (1997), 131.

71. Julian, VII, 60.

72. F.L Jones ed. The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley (1970) II, 73.

73. Hoagwood refers to the impossibility for scepticism "of perceiving in a perception anything more than a perception, and specifically the impossibility of perceiving in a perception its own absolute truth." (1988), 3.

74. Gilles Deleuze (1953), 13-4. My translation.

75. Condillac, cited in Cassirer (1951), 101.

76. Julian, VII, 60.

77. Reiman and Powers (1977), 478.

78. The passage quoted from 'On Life' underlines the stringency of the law of the mind mentioned again in 'Speculations on Metaphysics': "His [the human being's] own mind is his law; his own mind is all things to him", Julian, VII, 65.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1. In 'Speculation on Metaphysics', Shelley states:

> The science of mind posseses eminent advantages over every other with regard to the certainty of the conclusions which it affords. It requires indeed for its entire development no more than a minute and accurate attention to facts. Every student may refer to the testimonials which he bears within himself to ascertain the authorities upon which any assertion rests... We are ourselves then depositories of the evidence of the subject which we consider. (Julian, VII, 63)

2. Julian, VII, 64 .

3. Julian, VII, 60.

4. Bowie (1997), 79.

5. Kritische Schriften und Fragmente 1-6, Paderborn, Ferdinand Schoningh (1988), 5, 29, cited in Bowie, (1997), 81.

6. Bowie (1997), 78.

7. 'On Life', Reiman and Powers (1977), 477.

8. Bowie refers to Schlegel's insistance on the serious search for truth and certainty, (1997), 78-9.

9. In 'What Metaphysics Are', Shelley insists: "Let me repeat that in the great study of ourselves we ought resolutely to compel the mind to a rigid examination of itself", Julian, VII, 62.

10. Bowie (1997), 82.

11. For Blanchot, "the realm of the imaginary is not a strange region situated beyond the world." 'Literature and the Right to Death', in Maurice Blanchot (1981), 36.

12. Blanchot uses the phrase, which is still suggestive of notions of an autonomous consciousness, in his comparatively early Faux pas (1943), 26.

13. "One cannot ascend from "the world" to art," SL, 47; EL, 50.

14. Bowie (1990), 75.

15. Friedrich Schlegel (1988), 5, 38, cited in Bowie (1997), 82.

16. Cited in Bowie (1997), 78.

17. Julian, VII, 64.

18. Rodolphe Gasché refers to these aspects as "a still unanalyzed presupposition in philosophy from Descartes to Kant", The Tain of the Mirror. Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection (1986), 15.

19. Gasché (1986), 13.

20. I refer here to Philippe Lejeune's Le Pacte autobiographique (1975), translated as On Autobiography (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1989).

21. It is to such distance, which is implied in the model of cognition and consciousness as immediate relations, that Maurice Blanchot refers in the following passage from The Infinite Conversation:

> ... there is a privation, an absence, precisely through which contact is achieved. Here the interval does not impede; on the contrary, it allows a *direct* relation. Every relation of light is an immediate relation.
>
> _ To see is thus to apprehend *immediately* from a distance"
> _ ...immediately from a distance and through distance. To see is to make use of separation, not as mediating, but as a means of immediation, as immediating. In this sense too, to see is to experience the continuous and to celebrate the sun, that is, beyond the sun: the One.

This passage is taken from one of the essays in the form of a dialogue, which is entitled "Speaking is not Seeing", IC, 28; EI 39.

22. Roberts also notes that the exclusion of interference in the classical project of a language which in naming things names their being "promises the same reconciliation with the world that Schiller and Schelling see in poetry". Roberts (1997), 178-9.

23. SL, 116; EL, 147.

24. Michael Holland, The Blanchot Reader (1995), 126.

25. SL, 229; EL 305. In his analysis of the way Blanchot's *récit* and notion of language oppose any alternative between revealing and concealing, Timothy Clark provides the following passage from *L'Attente l'oubli*, which also fits Shelley's 'Difficulty of Analyzing the Human Mind: "Through the waiting, that which turns itself from thought returns to thought, a thought become its turning away", cited in Timothy Clark, Derrida,Heidegger, Blanchot (1992), 92.

26. See Blanchot's essay on Georges Bataille 'The Limit-Experience' ('L'expérience-limite'), EI, 308, IC, 207. The same notion is connected to suffering (EI, 63; IC, 45).

27. Michael Holland argues that, in *The Space of Literature*, Blanchot found an exit out of the impasse of his "essentializing paralysis" whereby, on the one hand, his fiction became entirely occupied by the alternation of the narrating 'I' and the nameless 'he' which it takes as his subject, and, on the other hand, his

criticism amounted to a denunciation of the unacknowledged limits of what a given writer had said for the closure which those limits impose. Blanchot granted a new lease of life to the analytic language reduced to silence by literature in that *The Space of Literature* "seeks to *be* an instance of the literary space it refers to". Following this move, Blanchot's writing was able to abolish the conventional difference between the language of literature and the language of theoretical analysis. Holland (1995), 104-6. A similar accommodation of both the analytic and the poetic languages can be detected in 'Difficulty of Analyzing the Human Mind.'

28. Mark C. Taylor Altarity (1987), 92.

29. Blanchot describes this aspect of attention as follows: "It is not the self that is attentive in attention; rather, with an extreme delicacy and through insensible, constant contacts, attention has always already detached me from myself, freeing me for the attention that I for an instant become" (IC, 121; EI, 176)

30. This was Novalis's response to Fichte's ego-centered philosophy. See Bowie (1990), 75.

31. Novalis: "Every real beginning is a secondary movement", Band 2 Das philosophisch-theoretische Werk, ed. Hans-Joachim Mahl, Munich and Vienna, Hanser, 1978, 380, cited in Bowie (1997), 79.

32. IC, 210; EI, 311-2.

33. Julian, VII, 63.

34. IC, 121; EI, 177.

35. Clark (1997), 121.

36. Wasserman's terms, (1971), 5-6.

37. see Neil Fraistat on Wasserman and McTaggart,'Poetic Quests and Questioning in Shelley's *Alastor* Collection', Keats-Shelley Journal, XXXIII (1984), 161-82, 162.

38. Timothy Clark has argued in favour of close dates of composition (1989), 20-2.

39. This is the gist, or, at least, the basis of the interpretation of 'Alastor' in Harold Bloom, "The Unpastured Sea: An Introduction to Shelley", in Romanticism and Consciousness, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Norton, 1970), in Earl Wasserman, Shelley: A Critical Reading (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1971), and Mark Kipperman, Beyond Enchantment. German Idealism and English Romantic Poetry (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986).

40. They also include the poem within Shelley's debate with Wordsworth's retreat from his earlier visionary commitment. For

Wasserman, the poem rejects Wordsworth's assertion in *The Excursion* that mind and nature are fitted to each other, while for Carothers, 'Alastor' is a vindication of man's power to create, and a critique of the Excursion's Wanderer as embodying those who attempt to live without human sympathy, a failure attributed to the Narrator rather than the Poet.

41. Neil Fraistat, 'Poetic Quests and Questioning in Shelley's *Alastor* Collection', Keats-Shelley Journal, XXXIII (1984), 161-182, 174.

42. ibid. 164.

43. Judith Chernaik, 'The Figure of the Poet in Shelley,'Journal of Literary History, 35 (1968), 566-90, 585. See also Wasserman's similar argument (1971), 26.

44. For example, Richardson compares the fixation of the ideal upon a single vision with the creation of a false anthropomorphic image to make the unfathomable mysteries of the universe 'sufficiently comprehensible'. Richardson, Donna, "An Anatomy of Solitude: Shelley's Response to Radical Scepticism in *Alastor*', Studies in Romanticism, 31 (1992), 171-94, 182.

45. EI, 51; IC, 37.

46. EI, 65; IC, 46.

47. SL, 255; EL, 343.("devenue image, instantanément la voilà devenue l'insaisissable, l'inactuelle, l'impassible.") Translation modified. "l'impassible" (the impassive, the inscrutable) has been wrongly translated as "the impossible" in the American edition.

48. Joseph Libertson's summary of Levinas's understanding of desire goes along the same lines:

> The Other's escape from manifestation does not frustrate interiority's desire to seize it. It produces this desire

Joseph Libertson, Proximity: Levinas, Blanchot, Bataille and Communication (1982), 229.

49. This analysis differs from Nicholas Birns, for whom "[T]he putative consummation only reveals the fissiparousness and relationality upon which the vision is in the first place premised. The eidolon of the maid cannot at once be separate from and responsive to the poet, and when actualized in her fullest form she must dematerialize" (Birns, Nicholas, 'Secrets of the Birth of Time: The Rhetoric of Cultural Origins in *Alastor* and *Mont-Blanc*', Studies in Romanticism, 32 (1993), 339-67, 352. It also differs from Rajan's views that "the Narrator can no more abstract lyric from narrative than the Poet can achieve an epoche that will bracket the body of the veiled maid and give him access to her soul" (Rajan, 1990, 105). It can be argued, on the

contrary, that the maid's "soul" is even more insistent as it turns into ungraspable physical presence. In this case, it is also physicality which cannot be fixed into a limited being, and the maid's "body" is not an obstacle to her soul, but the tantalizingly perceptible manifestation of it, as lines 208-9 suggest: "Were limbs, and breath, and being intertwined / Thus treacherously?"

50. Clark (1989), 108-9.

51. Rajan (1990), 104.

52. Wasserman (1971), 40.

53. EL, 319; SL, 238.

54. Kirchoff, Frederick, 'Shelley's *Alastor*: The Poet Who Refuses to Write Language,' Keats-Shelley Journal, XXXII (1983), 108-23, 122.

55. ED, 192; WD, 125.

56. Rajan (1990), 104.

57. Kipperman (1986), 155.

58. SL, 47; EL, 51.

59. Gabriel Josipovici ed., The Siren's Song: Selected Esssays by Maurice Blanchot (1982), 62.

60. This aspect falls into line with Rajan's reading that the Narrator "casts his poem as quest narrative: the quest of the Poet for the epipysche and of the Narrator for the essential meaning of the Poet's life... it is just as possible to say that the contradictions that haunt the figure of the Poet arise precisely from his being the subject of a narrative", 1980, 102, 104) and also accounts for the Narrator's reproachfulness which may also be seen in terms of his own sense of guilt.

61. Vincent Newey, 'Shelley's "Dream of Youth": *Alastor*, "Selving" and the Psychic Realm,' Essays and Studies (1992), Percy Bysshe Shelley. Bicentenary Essays, Kelvin Everest ed., 1-24, 17.

62. The poet who carries out the mediation between men and the elements, whereby being can be grasped as a whole, lies at the center of Hölderlin's conception of poetry. In the essay entitled 'La parole sacrée de Hölderlin,' Blanchot notes that, for Hölderlin, poetry is the relation with being as an unlimited whole. The poet and his speech are destroyed as a way of conveying this unlimitedness. The following passage from this essay is reminiscent of the image of the pine in *Alastor*: "expiation et langage, c'est la même chose: le poète se détruit, et il détruit son langage qu'il habite, et il n'a plus ni avant ni après, suspendu dans le vide même" (expiation and language are

the same thing: the poet destroys himself, and the language which he inhabits; he has not got a before or an after, and is suspended in the void itself), La Part du feu (1949), 134.

63. Kirchoff (1983), 118.

64. Rajan (1990), 103.

65. Fraistat (1984), 167.

66. Reiman and Powers (1977), 504.

67. SL, 184; EL, 243. This is the movement against which, for Blanchot, one must defend oneself if one wants to produce. Otherwise, and as the Poet's process has made clear, this movement "becomes so vast that there is no more room or space for its realization." (SL, 52; EL, 56)

68. EL, 306; SL, 230.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

1. Wasserman (1971), 64.

2. Clark (1989), 164.

3. Shelley read Byron's 'The Lament of Tasso' (1817), and, in 1818, was involved in the composition of a tragedy on the subject of Tasso's madness. See Ralph Pite's introduction to *Julian and Maddalo*, The Poems of Shelley, Vol. 2, Kelvin Everest and Geoffrey Matthews eds. (Harlow, Pearson Education, 2000), 658-9, and Frederick Burwick,' Shelley's Narratives of Madness and the Romantic Reception of Tasso,' Studien Zur Englischen Romantik, 7, 300-18. On Tasso's career, repeating the pattern of aspiration, crisis and collapse figured by the poet of *Alastor*, see Clark (1989), 179-84. All quotations from *Julian and Maddalo* are from the edition established by Everest and Matthews.

4. IC, 32; EI, 45.

5. Ware,Tracy, 'Problems of Interpretation and Humanism in *Julian and Maddalo*', Philological Quarterly, 66 (1987), 118.4.

6. George McLennan, Lucid Intervals. Subjective Writing and Madness in History, (1982) 46.

7. Wasserman (1971), 75 cited in Ware (1987), 118.

8. Everest & Matthews (2000), 660.

9. Richard Cronin, Shelley's Poetic Thoughts (1981), 122.

10. Ibid., 119.

11. Everest and Matthews (2000), 660.

12. Ware (1987), 118.

13. Hirsch, Bernard A., 'A Want of That True Theory': *Julian and Maddalo* as Dramatic Monologue', Studies in Romanticism (17), 1978, 13-34, 26.

14. Hirsch (1978), 29.

15. Hirsch (1978), 25.

16. Shoshana Felman, Writing and Madness (1985), 50.

17. Tim Clark has used the term "double-bind" to sum up the contradictory nature of the Maniac's feelings, which he describes as follows: "The very love that manifests itself in the need to address oneself to the sympathy of another is also the very motive of his keeping silent," 1989, 197. Given the inefficacy of logical meaning in the Maniac's speech, the term 'double-bind', as defined in Rycoft's *Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, is particularly appropriate to the Maniac. It describes the situation of a person who is

> made the object of incompatible, contradictory emotional demands. [the schizophrenic response is] to lose the capacity to distinguish the logical status of thoughts. In other words, his DEFENCE against his confusion ... is to lose the capacity to understand those nuances which enable one to have insight into motives and to appreciate discrepancies between overt and concealed meanings.

Rycroft, Charles, ed. A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis, Nelson (1968), 36.

18. Maurice, Blanchot, Le Livre à venir (1959), 111.

19. Maurice, Blanchot La Part du feu (1949), 72.

20. Blanchot describes the impossibility to sort language out of the reality which it describes, that is, the point when language has taken everything over: "speech is speech against a ground of silence, but silence is still no more than a noun in language, a manner of speaking; or, the noun names the thing as being different from the word, and this difference can only be brought forth with the name... This amounts to saying that we speak by way of this difference which makes it so that in speaking we defer from speaking." (EI,44; IC, 32).

21. EL, 46; SL, 21.

22. Blanchot's statement that "when I speak death speaks in me. My speech is a warning that at this very moment death is loose in the world" (La Part du feu, 43; The Gaze of Orpheus, 326) is clarified when he underlines that the concept is not "the

instrument through which thought has contrived to refuse and to forget death", but on the contrary, its force resides "in having introduced [the negation that is proper to death] into thought." (EI, 48-9; IC, 35).

23. SL, 261; EL, 351.

24. Hill (1997), 115.

25. Ware (1987), 61.

26. Cronin (1981), 115-6.

27. SL, 227; EL, 302.

28. For Cronin, the Maniac's language "is the chaos of a poem," Cronin (1981), 125.

29. Cronin (1981), 119.

30. Wasserman (1971), 80.

31. Everest and Matthews (2000), 661.

32. Everest, Kelvin 'Shelley's Doubles: An Approach to *Julian and Maddalo*', in Kelvin Everest ed., Shelley Revalued. Essays from the Gregynog Conference (1983), 87.

33. On the Horatian tradition, which Shelley connects to his poem (Letters, II, 1970, 196) see Cronin (1981), 109-12.

34. Cronin (1981), 129.

35. SL, 52; EL, 56.

36. SL, 27; EL, 21-22.

37. SL, 226; EL, 301.

38. My argument falls into line with Tim Clark's analysis of "the poet's function as a transmitter of want", (1989), 210.

39. Critchley (1997), 47.

40. Ibid.

41. IC, 32; EI, 45.

42. SL, 46; EL, 48.

43. See Ralph Pite's Introduction to the poem, Everest and Matthews (2000), 656-7.

44. Shelley, Letters, ii (1970), 246.

45. Felman (1985), 51, 52.

46. In his Note dated 1970 for a new edition of his essay on Hölderlin, "Madness *par excellence*" (1951), Blanchot writes: "Madness would thus be a word perpetually at odds with itself." Holland (1995), 126.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 5

1. Reiman & Powers (1977), 482.

2. ibid.

3. ibid., 485.

4. ibid., 485, 487.

5. ibid., 488, emphasis added.

6. The danger of the "miracle" of life is clearly mentioned in 'On Life' (1819) "It is well that we are thus shielded by the familiarity of what is at once so certain and so unfathomable from an astonishment which would otherwise absorb and overawe the functions of that which is [its] object", op. cit. 475.

7. ibid., 482.

8. ibid., 406.

9. ibid., 482.

10. This notion is the basis of Blanchot's reflexions on Mallarmé's notion of poetry, as in his argument that the spell and fate of poetry involve imposture, see Blanchot (1949), 47. It also underlies his analyses based on the romantic notion that art "no longer seeks its proof in the presence of a finished object." SL, 216; EL, 286.

11. *The Triumph of Life* explores the threatening aspect attendant to the *Defence*'s statement that "[poetry] makes us the inhabitants of a world to which the familiar world is a chaos" (505), and which Blanchot associates in art with repetition, and with the impossibility for being to be at once (SL, 242-3; EL, 324-6).

12. Paul de Man has pointed out the distinction between the figures of the narrator and Rousseau and the voice that narrates the poem, but does not question and does not share their predicament. Paul de Man, "Shelley Disfigured", Harold Bloom et al. ed. Deconstruction and Criticism, (1979), 39-73, 64.

13. Cronin has underlined the reference of 'The Triumph of Life' to a literary genre illustrated by Petrarch and Dante, as well as the radical difference in philosophical outlook. For the Shelley of 'The Triumph', the revelation of an absolute and perfect reality is no longer possible as it was for the elder

poets, since, in Shelley's case, contemplation does not remove the veils without itself acting as a veil. 1981.

14. Reiman and Powers (1977), 505.

15. SL, 261; EL, 351. For Blanchot, when death has lost its decisiveness as an event, then, possibility and truth are also withdrawn, and decisiveness becomes repetition.

16. WD, 21; ED, 40.

17. Maurice BLanchot, 'Mallarmé and the Art of the Novel' in Holland (1995), 45, "Mallarmé et l'art du roman" rpt in Faux pas (1943), 197-204.

18. Reiman and Powers (1977), 489, 486.

19. Cronin (1981), 217.

20. Reiman and Powers, (1977), 477.

21. 'Moral Science', Julian, vii, 82, in Clark (1989), 243.

22. SL, 262; EL, 353. Translation modified. In this passage, Blanchot uses the theme of magic to give an account of what "to live an event as an image" is like. His use of magic (*magie*) seems to be motivated mainly by the fact that the word is an anagram of *image*. The term "man" instead of "magician" is more appropriate to my argument.

23. See Blanchot: "The dream is without end, waking is without beginning; neither one nor the other ever reaches itself. Only dialectical language relates them to each other in view of a truth", WD, 36; ED, 61.

24. Robert C. Solomon, History and Human Nature. A Philosophical Review of Euroepan History and culture, 1750-1850 (1980), 68-9.

25. "I am unlike anyone I have ever met; I will even venture to say that I am like no one in the whole world", in Solomon (1980), 55.

26. As Rajan has underlined, the level at which the narrator's vision can be deemed to be critical is unclear: "as he approaches his vision, he is uncertain as to whether it has the status of a revelation of the way things are or a demonic parody of the way things should be", Rajan (1980), 66.

27. Reiman and Powers, (1977), 475.

28. see Chapter 1.

29. Shelley, Letters, i (1970) 430, cited in Clark (1989), 230.

30. The Social Contract (1762), ed. Charles M. Sherover, New York, New American Library (1974), 5, in Solomon (1980), 64.

31. Reiman and Powers (1977), 477.

32. WD, 40; ED, 69.

33. This is the subject of Clark, (1989).

34. Simon Haines, Shelley's Poetry. The Divided Self (1997), 230-2.

35. In *A Philosophical View of Reform*, Shakespeare and Bacon are both "the effects of the ...spirit [of liberty] in men's minds, and the causes of its more complete development", Julian, vii, 7. In *A Defence of Poetry*, Bacon "was a poet" Reiman & Powers (1977), 485.

36. See Clark, : "In Rousseau's account, it is his very subjection to the forces embodied in his own passions that renders him a revolutionary influence," (1989), 238.

37. Hutchinson (1990), 33.

38. Clark (1989), 120; 208-10.

39. Blanchot, Le Livre à venir (1959), 59-69.

40. *A Defence of Poetry*, Reiman and Powers (1977), 500.

41. Hodgson, 1981, 609-10.

42. De Man (1979), 63.

43. The forgetfulness befalling Rousseau under the action of the Shape all light has been seen as a token of the decline of his spirit, or of "compromis[ing] his ideal", Hodgson (1981), 612.

44. This interpretation relies on de Man's argument that, in effect, the Shape goes under through the intensification of the same movement which allowed it to "glide along", l. 371. De Man's interpretation revolves around his apt remark that "it is precisely these 'feet' which extinguish and bury the poetic and philosophical light", hence its obscure tenour. de Man (1979), 60.

45. *A Defence of Poetry*, Reiman and Powers (1977), 504.

46. See Roberts (1997), 205.

47. WD, 14; ED. 29-30.

48. De Man (1979), 54.

49. ibid., 64.

50. ibid., 62.

51. ibid., 65.

52. ibid., 65.

NOTES TO THE CONCLUSION

1 See Hodgson's argument around the fact that Rousseau is included in the poet-narrator's vision makes a total parallel between Rousseau's experience and the narrator's impossible. Whereas both see the triumph proceeding through the valley, for Rousseau, as included in the vision, the sight is not visionary, but actual. Hodgson (1975), 598.

2. *A Defence of Poetry*, Reiman and Powers (1977), 493.

3. 'Mallarmé and the Art of the Novel', in Holland (1995), 49.

4. Maurice Blanchot, Le Livre à venir (1959), 49.

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